

Ready Service Lockers Ashore



Aviation Safety Board
26-02

By Gunnery Sgt. Samuel Lee
Naval Safety Command



Ready Service Lockers Ashore

Personnel assigned to ordnance handling duties, whether in Navy ratings or Marine Corps Military Occupational Specialties, should be well-versed in the proper care and management of Ready Service Lockers (RSL). These lockers provide near-immediate access to explosives or ammunition required for mission readiness. However, RSLs are routinely flagged during Naval Safety Command assessments for issues related to fire protection, maintenance and security.

To uphold required safety and security standards, all personnel must become familiar with the publications serving as your foundation for proper RSL management:

NAVSEA OP 5 – Ammunition and Explosives Safety Ashore

OPNAVINST 5530.13 – Navy Conventional Arms, Ammunition and Explosives (AA&E) Physical Security Policy Manual

MCO 5530.14 – Marine Corps Physical Security Program Manual

Key Security Considerations

A common starting point during safety assessments is a review of the RSL access roster and key control log. These documents must be accurate, secure and properly maintained.

- Access rosters should be secured in a discreet location — never posted openly or left in plain sight. While there is no standard directive for securing the access roster, best practices include storing them in the RSL or in the Ordnance Board Chairman’s program binder.
- Rosters must be updated regularly. Common assessment findings include outdated names (personnel who have transferred) or missing current personnel. No one should access the RSL until their name is listed on the roster and approved by the commanding officer (CO).
- The key checkout log must match the roster exactly. Personnel should print their full official names, no nicknames or call signs.
- The person who checks out the key should not check it back in themselves. This two-person control ensures accountability and maintains a secure chain of custody.

Command Responsibility and Installation Policy

Ultimately, the unit CO holds the responsibility for the security of arms and explosives. This responsibility extends to the host station's CO when a unit is operating on another service's installation (e.g., a Navy squadron on a Marine Corps installation).

While policies between services may be similar, units must always follow the host installation's specific physical security requirements in addition to their own service guidance.

Visual Inspections and Maintenance Standards

After verifying documentation, safety inspectors will typically perform a visual inspection of the RSL. Common inspection points include:

- Proper electrical grounding and test documentation.
- Clearly posted fire safety signage and proximity to fire extinguishers or other firefighting equipment.
- General housekeeping and access conditions.

One frequent finding is overgrown vegetation, especially in environments where plant growth is rapid. According to NAVSEA OP 5, a 50-foot firebreak must be maintained around RSLs and all vegetation within that radius must be trimmed below 18 inches. At locations like Naval Air

Ready Service Lockers Ashore

Faculty Atsugi, Japan, or Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California, vegetation may need to be monitored weekly. If the fire break becomes compromised, notify base facilities or the party responsible for grounds maintenance.

Another common issue is excess packaging or waste around the RSL. While it's acceptable to retain packaging temporarily during operations, all waste must be removed once the ordnance has been expended to eliminate fire hazards and maintain inspection readiness.

Routine Self-Inspections: A Force Multiplier

While the Officer in Charge or ordnance division heads carry oversight responsibility, every Sailor or Marine handling ordnance should take ownership of RSL upkeep.

- Conduct regular walk-through of RSL areas.
- Report discrepancies early before they become safety violations.
- Use NAVSEA OP 5 and other governing instructions to cross-check requirements.
- Maintain a culture where every team member contributes to safety and security, not just leadership.

Keep the Standard, Protect the Mission

Neglecting Ready Service Locker maintenance, security or fire safety may seem like a minor oversight, but the consequences are not. From outdated rosters to overgrown vegetation, small issues compound quickly, leading to inspection failures or worse — fire, theft or injury.

Maintaining compliance doesn't require extraordinary effort. It requires ownership, consistency and a clear understanding of the standards. By applying published guidance, conducting routine self-checks and holding ourselves and our teams accountable, we ensure our RSLs meet the mark every day. Protect the mission. Maintain the locker. Enforce the standard.

For further guidance, refer to NAVSEA OP 5 Volume 1, OPNAVINST 5530.13C and MCO 5530.14A. Always consult your command's Ordnance Officer or Safety Manager for clarification or training support.

Cover: A ready service locker belonging to the Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron Seven stands clear of debris with proper safety signage at Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, October 4, 2023. (U.S. Navy photo)