

# RAF Fauld, Staffordshire, England – 27 Nov 1944

**MSIAC**  
Munitions Safety Information Analysis Center



At 1111 hrs on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1944, an explosion occurred at RAF Fauld, an underground munitions storage depot. The depot was estimated to be holding approximately 3.6 million kg of ammunition, mostly comprising high explosive filled bombs, when it exploded.

Witnesses reported two huge explosions followed by two distinct columns of black smoke in the form of a mushroom cloud ascending several thousand metres and saw a blaze at the foot of the column. In addition an open dump of incendiary bombs caught fire and it was allowed to burn itself out without damage or casualties.

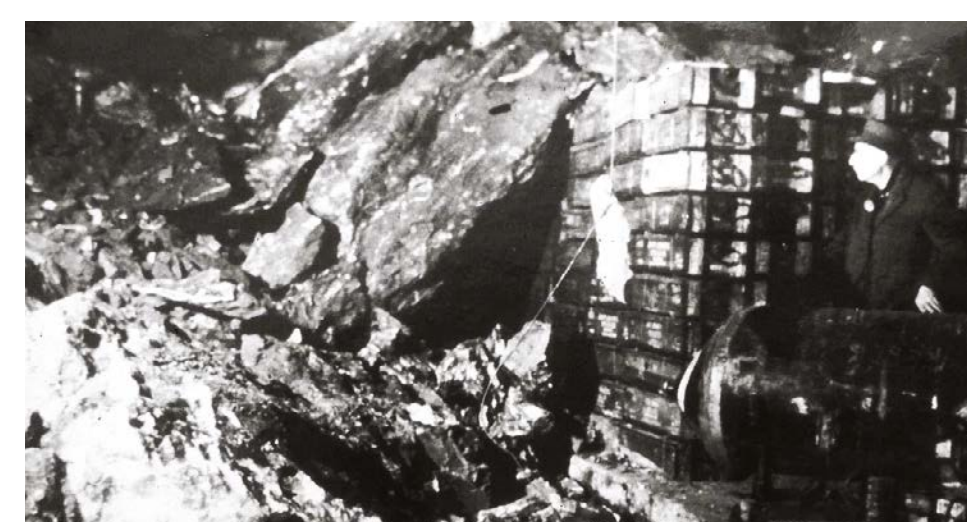
The exact death toll is uncertain but it is believed that about 70 people died in the explosion.

Nearby farm cottages were either destroyed or extensively damaged. A nearby reservoir containing 450,000 m<sup>3</sup> of water was burst in the explosion, engulfing an adjacent lime and gypsum works and killing 31 people. Damage occurred to all property within a 1.3 km radius. The explosion left a crater 30 m deep and 300 m wide.

The RAF Fauld explosion is regarded as one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history and the largest to occur on UK soil.

The cause of the disaster was not made clear at the time. However, there had been staff shortages and 189 inexperienced Italian POWs were working in the mines at the time of the accident.

The Court of Inquiry found that the cause of the explosion was likely a site worker removing a detonator from a live bomb using a brass chisel rather than a wooden batten. An eyewitness testified that he had seen a worker using brass chisels in defiance of the strict regulations in force



**70 Fatalities**

**Unknown Injuries**

**Unknown Damages**