

Sunken WW II ship threatens Halifax harbour

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[CBC News](#)

Halifax is in danger due to a munitions ship that sank in approach to the harbour during the Second World War, experts say.

Now, navy divers want permission to move what is left of the deadly cargo to a deep-sea ammunition dump 45 nautical miles off the coast.

In 1942, the *Claire Lilly* ran aground at Black Point Rock while approaching Halifax Harbour.

The skipper had hugged the coast, staying in the shallows to avoid a German submarine. When it hit, the rock broke the ship's back. Crews worked to save the cargo of precious steel. But what was left of the hull went to the bottom, along with a lot of ammunition and bombs.

Salt water and a churning sea have made the bombs unstable. Each year some wash up on shore.

But the aging bombs are dangerous even if they stay on the bottom, says Lieut.-Cmdr. Jim Hewit.

Hewit is in charge of Canadian navy divers who specialize in dealing with sea mines and underwater explosives. He says the force of water pressure from a submerged bomb exploding could crush anyone nearby.

"If you were within, say, 1,000 yards of the explosive I think it would do you quite serious damage, if not kill you," Hewit told CBC News. "Beyond that there would be a possibility of injury and that would be against your lungs or the soft tissues in your stomach."

The only way to manage the risk is to bury the bombs further out at sea, he says. But before his team can do that the project must complete an environmental review.

As part of that process the navy will hold a meeting Thursday night to get public input on its plan.