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Army Begins Shipping Improved 5.56mm Cartridge

PICATINNY ARSENAL, N.J. — The Army announced today it has begun shipping its new 5.56mm cartridge, the M855A1 Enhanced Performance Round, to support the war fighter in Afghanistan.

The new M855A1 round is sometimes referred to as “green ammo.”

The new round replaces the current M855 5.56mm cartridge that has been used by U.S. troops since the early 1980s.

The M855A1 resulted in a number of significant enhancements not found in the current round. These include improved hard target capability, more dependable, consistent performance at all distances, improved accuracy, reduced muzzle flash and a higher velocity.

During testing the M855A1 performed better than current 7.62mm ball ammunition against certain types of targets, blurring the performance differences that previously separated the two rounds.

The projectile incorporates these improvements without adding weight or requiring additional training.

According to Lt. Col. Jeffrey K. Woods, the program’s product manager, the projectile is “the best general purpose 5.56mm round ever produced.”

Woods said its fielding represents the most significant advancement in general purpose small caliber ammunition in decades.

The Enhanced Performance Round (EPR) contains an environmentally friendly projectile that eliminates up to 2,000 tons of lead from the manufacturing process each year in direct support of Army commitment to environmental stewardship.

Woods said the effort is a clear example of how “greening” a previously hazardous material can also provide extremely beneficial performance improvements.

Picatinny Arsenal’s Project Manager for Maneuver Ammunition Systems manages the M855A1 program.

Project Manager Chris Grassano called the fielding “the culmination of an Army enterprise effort by a number of organizations, particularly the Army Research Laboratory, Armament Research Development and Engineering Center, Program Executive Office for Ammunition and the Joint Munitions Command.

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“The Army utilized advanced science, modeling and analysis to produce the best 5.56mm round possible for the Warfighter,” he said.

The M855A1 is tailored for use in the M4 Weapon System but also vastly improves the performance of the M16 and M249 families of weapons.

A true general purpose round, the M855A1 exceeds the performance of the current M855 against the many different types of targets likely to be encountered in combat.

Prior to initial production, the EPR underwent vigorous testing. Official qualification of the round consisted of a series of side-by-side tests with the current M855.

Overall, the Army fired more than 1 million rounds to ensure the new cartridge met or exceeded all expectations. The M855A1 is without question the most thoroughly tested small caliber round ever fielded, Woods said.

The Army has recently completed the Limited Rate Initial Production (LRIP) phase for the M855A1 and is beginning the follow-on full rate production phase where they plan to procure over 200 million rounds over the next 12-15 months.

The M855A1 Enhanced Performance Round is the first environmentally friendly bullet resulting from a larger “greening” effort across the Army’s Small Caliber Ammunition programs. Other greening efforts include 5.56mm tracer, 7.62mm ball and green primers.

Soldiers in Afghanistan will begin using the new, improved round later this summer. The M855A1 clearly demonstrates that the Army is providing America’s warfighters the best possible ammunition.