
Dangerous Terrain

Mutants aren't the only foes in the GAMMA WORLD® game

By Dan Salas

In the 25th century world of the GAMMA WORLD® game, life is short and brutal. Only strong and well-equipped player characters have much chance of survival unless surrounded by the cushion of an organized society. Yet most of the usual dangers found in the game come from nonplayer characters, monsters, and an occasional Cryptic Alliance. What about the hazards of everyday life? Aren't there other reminders of the Social Wars than those mentioned above?

This article describes the terrain hazards which threaten the everyday existence of the Gamma World's inhabitants. In addition to the random encounter checks made for monsters, given in the third-edition Game Master's screen under Random Events, the Game Master should check for the random hazards outlined in Table 1 in this article.

The chance of a hazard encounter is 10% per four hours of overland movement, herein referred to as a March Turn, using the second-edition GAMMA WORLD game's terminology. A Search Turn is 10 minutes long, and an Action Turn is 10 seconds long (see pages 24-25 in the second-edition Basic Rules Booklet, and page 13 in the third-edition Rule Book).

Details on the tables

Radiation zone: This zone is an area of continuous radioactivity. Fields are 1-6 miles in diameter; they give off Intensity 3-6 radiation per March Turn. Craters are 100-600' in diameter and give off Intensity 2-12 radiation per Search Turn. Pools are water-filled craters, 10-100' in diameter, and cause Intensity 3-18 radiation damage to anyone who takes a drink.

Sometimes (40% of fields, 20% of craters, and 10% of pools) these zones present obvious signs of their radioactivity. These signs include a total absence of unmutated plant life or an unusual number of skeletons in the area. High-intensity

areas (levels 14+) might even give off a faint green glow at night.

Additionally, many species of mutated organisms can survive in a radiation zone; some actually thrive in it. Their presence can be a signal to the presence of radiation. More importantly, PCs may be alerted by the presence of Radioactivists in a nomad camp or shrine. Table 2 outlines the types of encounters possible. Roll 1d20 once for a pool, twice for a crater, or once per mile in a field.

Unstable energy cell: This forgotten power source lies half-buried in the ground, though it can be found by normal search activities. If handled, the energy cell reacts in the manner of its type: atomic cells give off intensity 3-6 radiation per hour to a 50'-radius area, while the other types each have a 25% chance of exploding. Chemical cells spray acid for 3-18 points of damage to anyone with 20'; hydrogen cells explode in flames, causing 2-20 points of damage to anyone with 20'.

An unstable energy cell cannot be recovered for use. Anyone who tampers with it takes radiation damage or risks an explosion as described above.

Robot: Randomly encountered robots are usually immobile and occasionally (25% chance) are partially buried underground and difficult to see. However, 50% of wild and killer robots wander freely about the countryside.

Nonfunctional robots come in three types: junk, salvageable, and revivable. Junk robots are little more than rusted heaps of metal and serve only to frighten travelers. Salvageable robots don't have enough undamaged parts to become functional, but can be stripped of parts and weapons (each piece has a 20% chance of being usable). Revivable robots can become operational in the hands of any PC who is skilled at working on robots.

Wild robots are described on page 56 in the second-edition Basic Rules Booklet, and on page 60 in the third-edition Rule Book.

Guardian robots are stationary and react to Pure Strain Humans and humanoids. The "intruders" are required to show an I.D. of Stage II (40%), III (30%), IV (20%), or V (10%). Otherwise the robot will demand that the PCs turn back the way they came. The consequences of refusal are made obvious by the robot's weaponry. Occasionally, a robot in an uncivilized area guards the entrance to an underground facility or military installation of the Ancients.

Killer robots react violently to any life forms that they detect. These robots fight only in self-defense against all other types of robots. If not programmed by currently active Cryptic Alliances or individuals, such robots are acting on programming from the Ancients or have been damaged and are behaving irrationally.

Land mine: There is a 40% chance that an unfortunate PC (randomly chosen from the group) has stepped on a weapon which reacts to pressure release. Once the pressure from the PC lifts, the weapon explodes and causes damage equal to the grenade of the same type as listed in the table. There is a 30% chance that the device simply explodes when stepped on, and a 30% chance that it malfunctions and fails to explode.

If he steps on the mine but it doesn't immediately explode, the victim can make a check versus IN x 5 to notice the weapon before detonating it. Other PCs can then attempt to figure out and thus disarm the mine, but risk damage to themselves as well as the one who triggered it.

Poison zone: Gas poison zones indicate a chemical leak producing a 10'- to 40'-diameter gas cloud. Perhaps the leak comes from a rusted metal container or a damaged gas grenade. The poison causes damage of Intensity 3-18 per Action Turn to all PCs in the poison zone. The poison effects the skin as well as the lungs, so PCs cannot avoid damage by simply holding their breaths or wearing gas masks.

Liquid poison zones occur in pools (85%) or small flowing streams (15%). A drink from the liquid causes damage of Intensity 11-18. The

liquid only occasionally (20% chance) seems like pure water, and then the zone is often accompanied by the skeletons of small animals or an unfortunate traveler. Otherwise, the liquid smells bad or looks unusual, perhaps having a strange color or texture.

Additional hazards

Some extra details can be added by the Game Master to prevent a boring repetition of encounters. For example, an unstable energy cell can be part of a revivable combat tank, and the cell will explode if the ignition is activated. Or maybe a land mine is one of two dozen mines in an area the PCs have entered. Perhaps a poison stream flows from an ancient factory building full of equipment, worker robots, and toxic chemicals.

Characters can be lured into a hazard, rather than just blundering into it. The simplest lures are artifacts and equipment in the danger zone. A radiation field is a perfect spot for ancient buildings and artifacts. Or maybe there is a gas leak at the entrance to an underground facility. Another lure can be a group of crossbow-firing Badders who ambush the PCs, hoping to draw them into a mine field!

A rescue mission is a good addition to an encounter. Perhaps a small child, teenager, elderly being, or the like has wandered into a radiation field. Maybe someone's baby has crawled through a mine field and is now making mudpies while surrounded by dozens of chemex explosives. A killer security robot might rampage through a helpless farming community. The adventuring lure will be hard for the PCs to resist.

Whatever the problem, it is possible for the settlement's leaders to offer rewards to the rescuing PCs. The rewards depend on the risk involved and the relative worth of the person in trouble (babies, children, and important officials have high worth, while village idiots, criminals, and unknown strangers have little worth). Rewards might include boosts to Status, gold, equipment, artifacts, or important information.

Any combination of hazards is possible. Even as the PCs face encounters from modules in the GAMMA WORLD game, adding these terrain hazards insures that the players are constantly challenged by the Gamma World.

Table 1
Random Hazard Generation

1d100	Encounter
	Radiation zone
1-10	Field
11-20	Crater
21-25	Pool
	Unstable energy cell
26-28	Atomic
29-31	Chemical
32-34	Hydrogen
	Robot
35-36	General household robot
37-39	Ecology bot - agricultural
40-43	Ecology bot - wilderness
44-46	Light cargo lifter
47-48	Medical robot
49-52	Security robot
53-54	Defense borg
55	Warbot
	Land mine
56-65	Fragment
66-68	Chemex
69-70	Energy
	Poison zone
71-75	Gas
76-85	Liquid
86-00	No terrain encounter

Modifiers:

Civilized area	+15
Deathlands	-15

Table 3
Robot Condition and Function

1d20	Condition & function
1-9	Nonfunctional, junk
10-11	Nonfunctional, salvageable
12	Nonfunctional, revivable
13-15	Functional, wild
16-17	Functional, guardian
18	Functional, killer of humanoids*
19	Functional, killer of Pure Strain Humans*
20	Functional, killer of humanoids and Pure Strain Humans*

* There is a 75% chance that the robot was programmed for this purpose by an evil individual or Cryptic Alliance.

Modifiers:

Civilized area	-5
Noncombative robot	-5
Security robot	-3
Warbot	+1

Table 2
Radiation Zone Encounters

Creature encountered	Pool (1d20)	Crater (1d20)	Field (1d20)
Blaash	1-2	1-2	1
Blight	3-4	3-4	2
Blood Bird	5	5	3
Gator	6-8	--	--
Kai Lin	9-10	6-7	4-5
Obb	11-12	8-10	6
Perth	13-15	--	--
Radioactivists*	16-17	11	7-8
Radiation pool	--	--	9-11**
No encounter	18-20	12-20	12-20

* Encounter will be with a nomad camp of 1d6+12 individuals (15%), 1-3 scouts (35%; Seniors, as per page 3 of the third-edition Rules Supplement), or unoccupied shrine (50%).

** Roll again on the Pool column for inhabitants.