

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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Series: Safety Management

Part 485: Safety and Occupational Health Program

Chapter 30: Firearms Safety Program Requirements for Non-Law Enforcement Personnel

Originating Office: Office of Occupational Safety and Health

485 DM 30

30.1 Purpose. This chapter provides the Department of the Interior (Department) policy and establishes minimum safety requirements for possessing, carrying, handling, and/or using firearms and ammunition by the Department employees for official purposes other than law enforcement.

30.2 Scope.

A. The policy in this chapter applies to those employees in all Bureaus and Offices who are authorized to possess, carry, handle, and/or use firearms and ammunition for official purposes other than law enforcement.

B. The policy in this chapter does not apply to the following:

(1) Department Law Enforcement Officers. Department Law Enforcement Officers are governed by the policy in [446 Department Manual \(DM\) 10 – “Firearms Standards”](#).

(2) Personnel using reproduction firearms as part of historic interpretive firing demonstrations subject to National Park Service Director’s Order 6.

30.3 Authorities.

A. [5 U.S.C. § 301 “Departmental Regulations.”](#)

B. [Public Law 91-596, "Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970," \(The Act\) Section 19.](#)

C. [Executive Order 12196, "Occupational Safety and Health Programs for Federal Employees," Paragraph 1-201\(a\).](#)

30.4 References.

- A. [18 U.S.C. 922 \(g\), “Lautenberg Amendment to the Gun Control Act of 1968.”](#)
- B. [5 U.S.C. § 8101, et seq., “Federal Employees’ Compensation Act.”](#)
- C. [28 U.S.C. § 1346\(b\), “Federal Tort Claims Act.”](#)
- D. [Title 14, Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\), Part 135, Section 119, “Prohibition Against Carriage of Weapons.”](#)
- E. Title 29, CFR, Subtitle B, Chapter 17 “Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Department of Labor,” [Parts 1904, 1910, and 1960.](#)
- F. [446 DM 17, “Serious Incident Reporting.”](#)
- G. [485 DM 7, “Accident/Incident Reporting and Investigations.”](#)
- H. DOI Operational Procedures Memorandum (OPM) – 33, [“Aerial Capture, Eradication, and Tagging of Animals \(ACETA\).”](#)
- I. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Manual 495, [“Explosive Materials Code,”](#) latest edition.
- J. [Department of the Interior Office of Aviation Services Handbook “Interagency Aviation Transport of Hazardous Materials.”](#)
- K. [Department of the Interior Personal Property Management Program Directive 114-60, “Personal Property Management Program.”](#)
- L. Department of the Interior Aviation Management Services Operational Procedures Memorandum 05-AR-18, [“Use of Firearms in Survival Equipment for Fleet Aircraft.”](#)
- M. National Park Service Director’s Order 6, [“Interpretation and Education,” Paragraph 8.7.](#)

30.5 Definitions.

- A. [Aircraft.](#) Aircraft owned or under contract by the Department, or privately owned aircraft used by Department employees for official travel.
- B. [Approved Ammunition.](#) Manufactured ammunition of the same caliber or gauge as the firearm that is intended to be used in and suitable for use in that firearm and meets the requirements identified in a Bureau or Office policy or a written risk assessment or Job Hazard Analysis (JHA).

C. Approved Firearm. A properly calibrated or gauged firearm of acceptable action based on a Bureau or Office policy or a written risk assessment or Job Hazard Analysis (JHA).

D. Authorized Firearm. An approved firearm that an employee has received training for and written authorization to use as indicated by a designated firearms instructor and the employee's supervisor's signature on the Certificate of Firearms Authorization (CFA).

E. Employee. An individual in a competitive or excepted service position (as defined by 5 U.S.C. 7511a) or in a probationary or trial period for a competitive or excepted service position. The definition includes volunteers with a signed Volunteer Agreement. Employees are covered by the Federal Employees' Compensation Act and the Federal Tort Claims Act.

F. Firearm. Any rifle, shotgun, pistol, or revolver (including starter guns) which will, is designed to, or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive. The term in this chapter does not include flare guns, rocket net or cannon net firings, compressed air or carbon dioxide (CO₂) guns, or electronic control devices (e.g., TASERs).

G. Firearm Expert. To be recognized as a firearms expert often involves a combination of knowledge, practical skills, experience, and ongoing learning in the field of firearms. In addition, a firearms expert has extensive knowledge, skills, and experience related to firearms, their mechanisms, usage, safety protocols, and maintenance and repair.

H. Firearm Safety Locking Device. A firearm-specific, trigger guard/action guard locking device, box, or case secured with a lock that when activated, prevents use of the firearm by unauthorized persons.

I. Incident. The unauthorized use of a firearm no matter what the result, or the authorized use of a firearm that results in human death, injury to persons, unintended death to wildlife, property damage, or other similar outcome.

J. Job Hazard Analysis (JHA). An analysis that examines job tasks to identify and address potential safety hazards. It focuses on the relationship between the employee, the task to be accomplished, the tools to be used (i.e., a firearm), and the work environment using a risk assessment process that takes into account the severity and probability of each identified hazard. With respect to this policy, a JHA identifies job tasks to determine if a firearm is required to control a work environment hazard that exposes an employee to potential harm. The JHA process is conducted as part of the authorization process and shall be utilized as one method to determine if a firearm is the appropriate tool to be used in the performance of work duties.

K. Physically Secured. Secured by a firearm safety locking device and placed within a closed secure container such as the trunk of an automobile.

L. Possess. Having a firearm in the employee's physical custody or control.

M. Range Safety Officer. A person qualified/certified by a third-party organization, such as the National Rifle Association, to organize, conduct, and supervise safe shooting activities, and range operations.

N. Risk Assessment. A process to identify potential hazards and analyze what could happen if a hazard occurs, also referred to as a JHA.

30.6 Responsibilities.

A. Assistant Secretary – Policy, Management and Budget.

- (1) Serve as the Departmental Designated Agency Safety and Health Official (Departmental DASHO) or designate as authorized.
- (2) Provide management direction and support necessary for the Department to effectively carry out the requirements of this chapter.
- (3) Provide adequate resources (staff and funds) to implement and administer the firearms safety requirements for non-law enforcement personnel established in this chapter.

B. Program Assistant Secretaries. Ensure that heads of Bureaus and Offices are accountable for fulfilling their firearms safety responsibilities for non-law enforcement employees.

C. Director, Office of Occupational Safety and Health.

- (1) Advise the Departmental DASHO on carrying out the Department's firearms safety requirements for non-law enforcement personnel established in this chapter.
- (2) Develop policy consistent with the minimum requirements established in this chapter.

D. Heads of Bureaus and Offices.

(1) Ensure that their Bureau or Office implements this chapter's requirements for non-law enforcement firearms and ammunition and promulgate written Bureau- or Office-level policies that are approved by the Department DASHO.

(2) Ensure that appropriate personnel and resources are allocated to support implementation of the requirements of this chapter.

- (3) Designate a Firearms Program Manager (FPM).

E. Bureau Firearms Instructors.

- (1) Conduct firearms training courses in accordance with policies, procedures, and curriculums in paragraph 30.7, D.
- (2) Promote firearms safety and the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- (3) Maintain records for training exercises that include firearm type, ammunition used, description of the course of fire, and other pertinent information as required by the responsible Bureau or Office.
- (4) Issue a Certificate of Firearms Authorization (CFA) to each employee who successfully completes required firearms training.
- (5) Conduct live firearms training.

F. Supervisors.

- (1) Ensure that background checks are conducted, and training is successfully completed before authorizing employees to possess, carry, handle, or use firearms in the performance of their official duties.
- (2) Ensure that the minimum requirements provided herein, and any additional requirements imposed by their Bureau or Office are met before a non-law enforcement employee is authorized to possess, carry, handle, and/or use firearms and ammunition.
- (3) Ensure custody and control of firearms and ammunition when they are not issued or being used, following [410 DM 1, Personal Property Management](#), the [Interior Property Management Directive](#) and Bureau or Office policies for accountable property management.
- (4) Authorize employees to possess, carry, handle, or use firearms in the performance of their official duties, only after a comprehensive review of their job duties and a written risk assessment identifying a need for a firearm, and final review and approval of a second-level supervisor.
 - (a) Determine the proper caliber or gauge for firearms as well as the acceptable action type and configuration, in consultation with a firearms expert, as necessary, based on Bureau or Office policy, written risk assessment, or JHA.
 - (b) Ensure that employees are trained and use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) appropriate for the activity as documented in the JHA.
- (5) Complete a CFA for employees who have completed a firearms training course. The CFA shall not cover more than a 12-month period and shall include the following information:
 - (a) Employee's name.

- (b) Project description.
- (c) Location of field work.
- (d) Purpose of use.
- (e) Type of firearm(s).
- (f) Firearm serial number(s).
- (g) Supervisor's name.
- (h) Supervisor's signature and date.

G. Firearms Program Managers.

- (1) Provide guidance and oversight for the Bureau or Office non-law enforcement firearms and ammunition program.
- (2) Ensure firearms training is available to address specific program needs and meets the requirements specified in paragraph 30.7B of this chapter.
- (3) Conduct annual audits of the Bureau or Office non-law enforcement firearms and ammunition, to include firearms numbers, types, and locations.
- (4) Ensure firearms training instructors meet minimum requirements, such as the completion and receipt of certification in a National Rifle Association (NRA) Instructor Training Course, or equivalent, for the area of specialization taught (e.g., rifle, handgun, or shotgun) and that they teach the designated curriculum (such as the NRA curriculum) and any additional modules required by the Bureau or Office.

H. Employees.

- (1) Successfully complete training as required in this chapter.
- (2) Comply with the requirements provided in this chapter, the requirements issued by their Bureau or Office, and general firearms safety rules.
- (3) Ensure the security of firearms at all times. Unauthorized persons are not allowed to handle firearms. Firearms not in the employee's immediate control must be properly secured and kept out of the reach of children, or other unauthorized persons.
- (4) Report, immediately, the loss or theft of any firearm in accordance with Bureau or Office policies. This generally includes the supervisor, local law enforcement, and custodial officer, and may require completing a report of survey for any lost, damaged, or destroyed firearm or ammunition.

(5) Use required PPE.

(6) Thoroughly wash hands after handling or using a firearm or ammunition.

(7) Notifying their supervisor within 24 hours of any changes in their status that would affect their authorization. For example, employee performing or reporting for duty in a state of being considered physically or psychologically unfit – such as – but not limited to taking prescription medication that may adversely affect the employee’s ability to safely perform assigned duties; having just been convicted of a felony or convicted of a misdemeanor for domestic violence or having been placed under a domestic violence restraining order, etc.

30.7 Firearms Safety Program Requirements.

A. General Requirements.

(1) Employees must be currently authorized to possess or use firearms and ammunition in accordance with the authorization section 30.7 B. of this chapter and any Bureau or Office policies.

(2) Prior to possessing, carrying, handling, or using a firearm in the performance of their official duties, employees must pass a background check in accordance with paragraph C below.

(3) Prior to being authorized to possess, carry, or use a firearm in the performance of official duties, employees must successfully complete the minimum training required by the Department and their Bureau or Office.

(4) Employees may only possess or use firearms and ammunition for the purpose specified in the CFA.

(5) The use of firearms and ammunition by non-law enforcement employees shall be recorded and tracked as required in this chapter and by Bureau or Office policies.

(6) Employees must comply with the following:

(a) the requirements of the Endangered Species Act, 16 USC 1551-1544, Marine Mammals Protection Act, 16 USC 1361 – 1421h, and other applicable Federal and state animal protection laws when using firearms against wild animals; and

(b) all applicable Federal, state, and local laws, when possessing, carrying, handling, or using firearms.

(7) Employees are prohibited from carrying concealed firearms except in a legally prescribed manner, as required for transport or other reasons legitimately related to their official duties.

B. Authorization

(1) Criteria.

(a) A comprehensive JHA shall be completed by the supervisor and employee that focuses on job tasks to identify a requirement for a firearm. The JHA shall include determining the proper caliber or gauge for firearms as well as the acceptable action type and configuration.

(b) A determination must first be made whether the regular duty activities of the employee (such as specimen collection, herd culling, defense from wildlife, etc.) require them to possess, carry, or use a firearm.

(2) Process.

(a) The employee and supervisor complete a JHA to determine whether there is a need for a firearm.

(b) The supervisor initiates a background check.

(c) The supervisor ensures the employee is scheduled and completes the mandatory firearm training course.

(d) The supervisor ensures the employee reviews and agrees to the rules of safe firearms handling in the CFA, and the supervisor and employee signs the CFA.

(e) The employee's second line supervisor reviews the CFA and signs as the final approving official.

C. Background Checks. A background check must be completed following the requirements determined by the Bureau or Office and consistent with checks performed by Federally licensed firearms dealers. The background check, at a minimum, will ensure that the employee is not prohibited from owning or possessing a firearm under the Gun Control Act of 1968, see 18 USC §§ 922 (g) & (n), including but not limited to the Lautenberg Amendment, see 18 USC §§ 922 (g)(9). Employees who are restricted by Federal, state, and local laws or regulations shall not be permitted to possess or handle firearms or ammunition. In addition to Federal laws, the authorizing official, as determine in section 30.7, B. of this chapter, shall verify the employee is not restricted by their local or state laws where the employee resides and works prior to authorizing employee to possess, handle, or use firearms or ammunition in the performance of duties. The background check is conducted by the Bureau or Office in consultation with the law enforcement office that will prescribe the appropriate background check method.

D. Training.

(1) Non-law enforcement employees who possess, carry, handle, or use a

firearm in the performance of official duties must successfully complete training developed by their Bureau or Office, and specific to their program needs. At a minimum, the training must include the following:

- (a) General and range firearms safety.
- (b) Federal, State, and Local laws and Bureau and Office policies.
- (c) Employee and supervisory responsibilities.
- (d) Reporting. (See Sections H)
- (e) Firearms care and maintenance.
- (f) Basic firearms handling skills.
- (g) Live fire exercises.
- (h) Firearms qualification.
- (i) Firearms Storage and Maintenance (Section 30.7 F) and Ammunition Storage (Section 30.7. G).

(2) Qualification will include the successful demonstration of safe handling of all firearms on the employee's CFA, and knowledge of storage, security, recordkeeping requirements, and practical firearm handling as demonstrated by live fire exercises.

(3) The minimum passing score for the firearms course is 70 percent; however, scores will be recorded as pass/fail on the employee's training record.

(4) Safety training required in this policy is also required for all employees responsible for maintaining firearms and ammunition inventories.

(5) Refresher training.

(a) In order to renew the CFA, employees must complete refresher training annually that addresses (a)-(h) above.

(b) Firearms training developed by Bureaus and Offices must require employees to successfully complete refresher training and perform firearms qualifications specific to their program needs.

(c) Qualification exercises for refresher training shall include all firearm types listed on the employee's CFA.

(d) The CFAs for employees who cannot demonstrate that they have

successfully completed their refresher training and performed their firearms qualification shall not be renewed.

(6) Firearm Instructor Qualifications. Firearms instructor qualifications include:

(a) Satisfactory completion and receipt of certification in a National Rifle Association (NRA) Instructor Training Course, or equivalent certification course of fire as determined by the Bureau or Office, for the area of specialization taught (e.g., rifle, handgun, or shotgun).

(b) Knowledge and understanding of any special requirements imposed by the Bureau or Office.

(7) Live fire exercises will always be conducted under the supervision of an instructor on a range supervised by a Range Safety Officer or in a designated area determined to be safe by the instructor.

E. Carrying and Transporting Firearms and Ammunition.

(1) Motor Vehicles and Watercraft. Firearms shall not be left unattended in motor vehicles or watercraft, used for official business, unless they are physically secured.

(2) Aircraft. Transport of firearms and ammunition on DOI aircraft, and privately owned aircraft used for official business, will conform to the Department's [NWCG Standards for Aviation Transport of Hazardous Materials](#), Chapter 7. To transport ammunition in aircraft, all of the following conditions must be met:

(a) Loaded weapons may be transported in aircraft only when the mission dictates their use in flight or soon after landing.

(b) Ammunition may be carried on aircraft if contained in original package, box, pack, or manufactured container designed for transporting ammunition.

(c) Ammunitions must not be stored next to or in contact with compressed gases, flammable liquids, or corrosives.

(3) Federal Facilities. Before entering a federal facility, firearms will be unloaded and secured.

(4) Transporting Firearms on commercial conveyance (planes, train, aircraft, watercraft) is not authorized.

F. Firearms Storage and Maintenance.

(1) All firearms shall be secured, unloaded, with a firearm safety locking

device as needed, in a locked safe, vault, or other approved Bureau or Office firearms storage container when not under the direct physical control of an authorized employee. The storage area should be alarmed if possible and access shall be controlled.

(2) Access to firearms storage containers shall be limited to only authorized employees.

(3) All firearms shall be inspected annually. The firearm will be properly maintained to ensure that it is in serviceable condition. Each Bureau or Office will establish written procedures and guidelines for inspecting and servicing firearms, to include the removal of firearms needing repair, conducting a visual inspection and safety function check of the firearm, and reviewing the maintenance and repair records prior to issuance to an employee. Routine inspection and maintenance shall be accomplished as needed, but no less than annually. Firearms in need of repair shall be taken out of service until such time that it is repaired and approved for use.

G. Ammunition Storage.

(1) Ammunition shall be stored in a locked safe, vault, or other approved by Bureau or Office storage container.

(2) Ammunition shall be separated from materials classified by the U.S. Department of Transportation, [49 CFR Part 173.2, Hazardous Materials Classes and Index to Hazard Class Definitions](#), as flammable liquids, flammable solids, and oxidizing materials by a distance of 15 feet (4.6 meters) or by a fire partition having a fire resistance of at least one hour.

(3) Ammunition shall not be stored together with explosive materials.

H. Recordkeeping.

(1) Property records for firearms and firearm ammunition will be maintained by the Bureau property officer in accordance with Department/Bureau/Office property management policies. The following must be maintained at the local level and available upon request for review.

(a) An inventory of all firearms stored in the armory or firearms container. The inventory shall include, at a minimum, the caliber, make, model, serial number, and property number of all firearms stored in the armory or container.

(b) Firearms inspection, routine maintenance, and repair records.

(c) Disposition records of surplus firearms or ammunition in accordance with property management regulations.

(d) All records of firearms training, including certifications that training requirements have been met.

(e) CFAs.

(f) JHAs used for determining the firearm caliber, gauge, action type, and firearm configuration.

I. Firearms Incident Reporting and Investigation. All firearms incidents shall be reported and investigated at an appropriate level determined by the Bureau or Office in accordance with the following:

(1) Incidents that are criminal in nature shall be reported to and investigated by the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

(2) Incidents that involve human death, personal injury, property damage, negligent discharge, or a “near miss” shall be reported and investigated in accordance with 485 DM 7, “[Accident/Incident Reporting and Investigations](#).”

(3) All firearm incidents shall be reported by the employee’s supervisor using the Department Safety Management Information System (SMIS).

J. Lost or Stolen Firearms. Lost or stolen firearms must be reported immediately in accordance with the Department, and Bureau or Office property management policies. This generally includes the appropriate property officer, employee’s supervisor, law enforcement authority of the Bureau or Office, and local enforcement authorities. The occurrence of lost or stolen firearms shall be fully investigated.