



PPC - Range Safety

****** Orientation for New Shooters ******

Introduction

A short Range Safety Briefing is given to all shooters prior to the start of matches at the PPC range. This is a longer, more detailed version which serves as a training tool and reference document.

The purpose of this document is to give new shooters a detailed orientation of the safety rules and range operating procedures that all shooters must follow in order to maintain safety and discipline when shooting in our organized PPC matches.

You should read this document in its entirety and keep it handy for ready reference. If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know.

General

Target shooting is among the safest of all sports when firearms are properly handled under supervision. Because we take gun safety seriously at HH&A, our safety record is outstanding to date and we would certainly like to keep it that way.

The rules and standard operating procedures included in this document provide for range supervision, and allow for enforcement of the rules to reduce or eliminate any safety infractions from occurring.

Our PPC matches are supervised by Range Safety Officers (RSOs). RSOs are in charge of running the range and have primary responsibility for its safe and smooth operation. They are there to ensure that all safety rules and procedures are followed, and to help you with any problems you may have.

RSOs have full authority over the range and its orderly operation. Shooters must obey all instructions, range commands, and warnings issued by the RSOs.

Failure to comply with range commands, or violation of any of the following rules and procedures, will result in match disqualification (DQ).

Safe and proper use of your firearm is your personal responsibility. You are the key to firearms safety. Make it your top priority!

Gun Safety Rules

Learning the proper and safe handling of firearms is of paramount importance, and is the single most important thing concerning guns of any type. These four cardinal rules of gun safety must be ingrained into your mind and must be followed at all times, with zero exceptions.

- 1. All guns are always loaded. Even if they are not, treat them as if they are.**

Rule #1 is a statement of mind, not a statement of fact. Even if your gun is not loaded, handle it as if it is. You must always treat your gun with the respect you would give to a loaded gun. More people are accidentally shot with guns that were believed to be unloaded than with guns believed to be loaded. Be dead serious about this.

- 2. Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.**

Be aware of where your gun is pointed every moment that it is in your hand. Uncase and case with the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. "It isn't loaded" is NOT an excuse – see Rule #1. Control your muzzle. Do not let it point in any direction other than safely downrange and never let the muzzle point higher than the top of the target.

- 3. Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target and you are ready to shoot.**

Keep your trigger finger in the "index position" alongside the frame above the trigger guard until your sights are on the target and you have decided to shoot. The reverse is also true: your finger goes back to "index" the moment you come off target. Nothing touches the trigger unless the sights are on target and you want to hear a loud noise. This is the golden rule. Its violation is directly responsible for at least 60% of unintentional (negligent) discharges.

- 4. Be sure of your target, and what is behind it. Never shoot at anything that you have not positively identified.**

Know what it is, what is behind it, and what might cross in front of it. You are personally responsible for every bullet that you fire, where it goes, and what it does. You must know where the bullet will land before you shoot. Don't point the gun at anything that doesn't have a good earthen backstop behind it.

If these simple rules are always followed, a negligent discharge causing injury or even death will simply be an impossible event.

Note that the term "negligent discharge", not "accidental discharge", is used. Put simply, except in very rare circumstances where a firearm is malfunctioning, there is no such thing as an accidental discharge. However, by strictly following all of the rules of firearms safety, no one will be injured or killed by a true accidental discharge. Any other unintentional firing of a gun means that the shooter was negligent in following safe firearms handling practice.

Range Safety Rules and Procedures

Always follow the **Ground Rules and General Range Regulations**, and the **PPC Combat Range Rules**, which are posted on yellow signs at the PPC Range.

In addition, shooters must follow the following range-specific safety rules and standard operating procedures, which are applicable when shooting in our PPC matches to ensure safety and discipline for individuals on and about the range, as well as safety for our surrounding neighbors.

Behind the Firing Line

- Do not bring loaded guns to the range. Guns must be unloaded, and holstered or bagged. Unloaded means no ammo in gun, magazine out, hammer down.
- We run a "cold" range. This means all guns must remain unloaded and holstered or cased, except when under the direction of the range officer on the firing line or when in a safe handling area.
- When you arrive, you may uncase and holster your unloaded firearm at the designated SAFE AREA, which will be a safe table set up behind the 25 yard firing line and off to the side of the range facing a safety berm.
- When using the safe table, stand facing the safety berm, and handle your gun so that the muzzle is always pointed toward the safety berm.
- Do not handle any ammunition in the SAFE AREA! You may handle ammunition, magazines, and speed loaders anywhere away from the SAFE AREA.
- Absolutely no gun handling behind the firing line, unless you are at the safe table.
- Once holstered, do not touch your firearm again until you are called to the firing line and instructed to load and make ready.

- Ear and eye protection are mandatory for everyone behind the firing line when the line is hot. That goes for shooters who are on deck, spectators, and anyone else in the close proximity of the range.

On the Firing Line

- Ear and eye protection are mandatory for all shooters on the firing line and all range personnel when the line is hot.
- Obey all range commands, instructions, and warnings issued by the RSOs. They are there to supervise and ensure safe operation of the range.
- Do not talk on the firing line while the RSO is issuing commands or instructions. It is a distraction, and the attention of all shooters is required for safety purposes.
- When called to the firing line and given the command to load, guns with mechanical thumb safeties (e.g., 1911s) must be put on “safe” before holstering.
- When handling your gun on the firing line, always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction downrange, no higher than the top of your target. Be careful not to “sweep” your gun muzzle to the left or right (abide by the 170 degree rule), in the air, or down at the ground in front of you.
- Be especially careful when drawing your gun. Don’t put your finger on the trigger, and don’t take the gun off “safe”, until it is completely drawn out of the holster and pointed downrange, and your sights are on your target.
- In addition, your finger must be kept outside the trigger guard when holstering, loading, unloading, reloading, or correcting a malfunction. In other words, finger indexed outside the trigger guard except when the sights are on the target.
- When given the command to make your gun safe:
 - For semi-autos, drop the magazine, lock the slide back, check the chamber to make sure it is empty, release the slide forward, safely lower the hammer, and then holster an unloaded gun.
 - For revolvers, open, empty, and close the cylinder, and then holster an unloaded gun.
- All rounds fired must impact the earthen backstop behind the targets. Rounds that leave the range endanger human life and property. There are houses just

over the top of the hill beyond the trees behind the backstop. Needless to say, it is imperative that no bullets leave the range.

- Once the match has started, do not bend over, make any unsafe movements, or go forward of the firing line at any time, until the firing line has been declared “Safe” and you have been given the command to do so.
- Any shooter can and should call a “Cease Fire” when an unsafe condition exists. If a Cease Fire is called, all shooters must stop firing immediately, index their trigger finger, keep their firearms pointed downrange in a low-ready position, and await further instruction.
- If you drop a magazine or speedloader during the match, do not bend over to pick it up. It is considered “dead” and cannot be used in the stage you are currently shooting. Always carry extras on your person in case this happens.
- After firing has ceased and the line has been declared “Safe”, the dropped magazine or speedloader can then be picked up and made ready for use in subsequent stages.
- No “alibis” or “refires” are allowed, so if you have a gun malfunction (e.g., misfeed, jam) on the line, try to safely clear it and keep shooting if possible. If the problem can’t be cleared, stop, index your trigger finger, keep your gun pointed downrange, and raise your non-shooting hand for assistance from the RSOs.
- If you have a “squib load” shot, stop immediately! Do not fire another shot. The bullet may be lodged in the barrel, and another shot may cause the gun to explode and cause injury or death to you and others around you. Index your trigger finger, keep your gun pointed downrange, and raise your non-shooting hand for assistance.
- Firearms and ammunition must be in safe operating condition and function properly. Shooters experiencing repeated problems with guns or ammunition (e.g., misfeeds, jams, misfires, squib loads, etc.) will be disqualified from further shooting until they can get their problems corrected and equipment returned to safe operating condition.
- If you have a unusable firearm, you may declare a disabled gun, and ask to either repair the disabled gun (if it can do it quickly and not hold up the match), or use a backup or borrowed gun of the same gun class, for any remaining unfired stages. Otherwise, you must drop out of the relay with your scorecard marked with DNF (Did Not Finish) and a score of zero. No refunds and no refires will be allowed.

- Any defective rounds encountered (e.g., duds, dented or bulged cases) must be turned over to range personnel for proper disposal. Do not deposit any live rounds into the trash cans.
- If there are indications that you are becoming unsafe, the RSO may issue a warning to you. If your gun handling has become unsafe, or you have committed another safety infraction, you may be disqualified (DQ'd). When you hear the command "STOP!", stop immediately, keep your gun pointed safely downrange, index your trigger finger, and await further instruction. (*Note: The RSO does not need to issue a warning prior to a DQ.*)
- If the RSO gives you a warning (e.g., finger, muzzle), correct your unsafe condition immediately, thank him for keeping the range safe, and learn from it.
- If you have been DQ'd, you are done shooting for the relay as a minimum, and no refund of match fees will be made. Your scorecard will be marked with DQ and a score of zero. Depending upon the severity of the violation, you may be DQ'd for the whole day. The RSO will talk to you about your safety violation to make sure you understand what needs to be corrected in the future.
- Repeat or serious safety offenders will be banned from shooting at our matches.

Safety Violations

Safety violations cannot and will not be tolerated. This is necessary in the interest of the safety of all competitors, RSOs, and spectators.

The following violations will result in a DQ:

- Breaking the 170 rule.
- Pointing a firearm (loaded or unloaded) uprange, or at another individual.
- Dropping a firearm (whether loaded or unloaded).
- Firing a shot that goes over the dirt backstop, or into the ground within 6 feet of the shooter.
- Leaving the firing line with a loaded firearm.
- Having a negligent discharge.
- Unholstering a firearm anywhere other than at the designated SAFE AREA or on the firing line.
- Handling ammunition in the SAFE AREA.
- Disobeying RSO commands, instructions, or warnings.
- Demonstrating unsportsmanlike conduct, or being belligerent or disorderly.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

- Committing any other action that constitutes unsafe or incompetent gun handling, poses potential danger to any person, or shows negligent disregard for commonly recognized safety practices.

Emergencies

In case an emergency situation arises during the match, the RSO will follow the established HH&A Emergency Procedures below:

- Call a Cease Fire and make the line safe.
- Take charge of the emergency situation.
- Ask for any medical doctors or EMTs on the range to help.
- Determine seriousness of injury (*major/minor*), and assign duties for other range personnel to help.
- Render aid. (*First aid kit is located on the wall in the PPC trailer.*)
- Call 911 for help, if necessary.
- Direct emergency responders to injury location:

Harrisburg Hunters' & Anglers' Association
6611 Hunters Run Road
Harrisburg, PA 17111

- Assign someone to stand by the clubhouse to direct emergency responders to the PPC Range.
- Contact Jerry Dougherty, HH&A President, at 717-319-8666 to make him aware of the situation.
- Take notes in order to document an Emergency Incident Report later.

Remember ...

Safety on the range is everyone's responsibility.

Safety first, last, and always!

Last update: November 16, 2021

*This is a living document. Please report any recommended changes to:
Eric L. Poole, 717-766-3625, poole.eric1@gmail.com.*