

FRANKLIN COUNTY SPORTSMEN'S CLUB, INC.

Physical Address

721 River Road, Deerfield, MA

Mailing Address for all correspondence and billing:

PO Box 716, Turners Falls, MA 01376

Website: www.fclsc.org

RULES AND POLICIES

(Revised June 2017)

PURPOSE

The Franklin County Sportsmen's Club is a private, non-profit, membership club that was established to promote and sustain the shooting sports in Franklin County, Massachusetts. The Club owns and maintains a shooting range facility on 81 acres in Deerfield, for the enjoyment and safe practice of the shooting sports by the Club's membership and guests.

FCSC's mission is to enhance and fully support the shooting sports in a safe and legal environment. Federal, State, Municipal and FCSC rules, regulations, laws and policies shall be followed by everyone who enters the property and uses the facilities of FCSC.

GOVERNANCE

Subject to its By Laws, FCSC is governed by a Board of Directors that is elected annually by the membership. The FCSC Board of Directors consists of 15 positions: 4 elected executive officers (President, Vice-president, Secretary, and Treasurer); 10 elected Directors; and the most recent past President.

The club's membership meets to discuss club business on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm.

MEMBERS

- This is a private members-only club.
- Members must wear their membership badge so it is visible while on club property.
- All members shall properly complete their annual renewal form when renewing their membership, and deliver it to the membership director along with the proper dues payment.
- PLEASE NOTE: If you allow your club membership to lapse for more than 2 years, you cannot do a renewal of membership. You must instead submit a New Membership application and go through the "new membership" process.
- There are no prorated memberships.
- All members shall perform an annual minimum of 4 hours of donated work or an equivalent monetary donation to the club (\$10 an hour), as stated on the membership form. The work obligation may be fulfilled in a variety of ways, such as: Help at one of the Club Work Bees; Join a Committee (Membership, Finance, Range and Safety, Field, Publicity); Help at one of the Club's Public Events; Help with Club Maintenance (empty trash into the dumpster, clean bathrooms, clean classroom, pick up brass and trash on ranges, etc.); Help with the Mowing; Help at FCSC's booth at the Franklin County Fair; Cook at one of the Summer Club Meetings, Registered Trap or one of our Events; Be a candidate for the Board of Directors.
- All members have the right and the responsibility to call a "Cease Fire" in the event of any perceived unsafe situation or activity. All shooters will immediately comply with any

call of "Cease Fire" by stopping shooting, placing guns down on the bench with actions open and stepping away from the firing line until the situation is resolved and safety restored.

- Any injury, damage or mishandling of a firearm incident that happens on club property must be reported to a board of director member **immediately**.
- Article 3, section 6 of the FCSC bylaws states: *All members must obey club rules and regulations. In the event that a member's actions or conduct is in violation of the rules or becomes injurious to the organization or its purposes, the club has the right to discipline the member according to the parliamentary procedure followed by this organization. The Executive Committee shall be the primary disciplinary body of the Organization and may invoke the right to use executive session for certain disciplinary proceedings.*

NEW MEMBERS

- Are on a probationary period for the first 6 months.
- Must have a safety check and skills evaluation by an experienced senior member designated by the board of directors before being allowed to use the indoor pistol range.
- At the safety session a new member must bring the firearm they plan to use on the indoor pistol range. The new member will be evaluated for the safe use of this firearm. Failure to demonstrate a sufficient level of skill and safety will result in not having access to the indoor pistol range until such time they can demonstrate sufficient skill and safety. This is to protect other club members and property.
- May not bring any guests for their first 6 months.

GUEST POLICY

The **Franklin County Sportsmen's Club** is not a public shooting range, but a private, members-only club. The public is welcome as an invited guest of the club, a guest of a member, or at a scheduled public event.

FCSC members may bring guests to the club, subject to the club's guest policy. Because a member is responsible for closely supervising a guest, a member may only bring 1 or 2 guests for a shooting session.

When shooting with a guest, only one gun may be in use by your party at a time so that the member can fully supervise the guest.

All guests must fill out and sign the Guest Waiver of Liability form as soon as they arrive at the club and BEFORE doing any shooting All guests must wear a Visitor Badge while at the ranges. Visitor Badges are located in the clubhouse on the wall by the Guest Waivers.

Guest Waiver of Liability forms can be downloaded from the website and can also be found on the wall just inside the classroom. Completed forms, with the **\$10.00 guest fee**, should be put into an envelope and the envelope placed into the front part of the lockbox on the wall.

Members are responsible for remaining with and supervising their guests at all times.

NON-MEMBERS

- All persons, who are not guests of a member or guests of the club (i.e. general public shooting Trap and Skeet, or participating in a Turkey Shoot) **shall** follow all rules, regulations, laws, and policies of the Franklin Country Sportsmen's Club specified here. Copies of this document are available in the clubhouse.
- Anyone on club property who does not follow these rules, regulations, or policies, will be asked to leave and not return. If necessary, they will be escorted off the premises.

ALARM SYSTEM

- All currently paid members **shall** be issued an electronic fob that will allow them access to the grounds and the clubhouse.
- There **shall** be a \$10.00 replacement fee for any lost or damaged fob.
- If at any time a member cannot access the alarm system; (i.e. front gate, main club house door) they should contact the President at a reasonable time to manage the situation.
- If at any time a fob does not seem to work, **please do not ever press any of the buttons on the panels as this will complicate the problem.**
- After any type of inclement weather, if a member finds that his or her fob does not seem to work, there might be other existing problems that need immediate attention.
- **If the fob does not work, please do not try and forcibly open the gate or main clubhouse door as this will surely cause damage. Please contact a club officer as soon as possible.**
- All members **shall** be responsible to maintain current membership in the club to keep their fob active, as it will not be the responsibility of the club to send out renewal forms or mailings to remind members to re-join.
- **Assigned club fobs (electronic access cards) may not be loaned or given to anyone.**

EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

- Call 911 immediately.
- Render first aid to the best of your ability.
- Send for the first aid kit/AED.
- If EMS is called, send someone to the front gate to direct them to the scene.

- Fill out Injury Report Form (see Appendix)

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

- There is ZERO TOLERANCE for any possession or use of illegal drug(s) while on club property.
- There is ZERO TOLERANCE for anyone being under the influence or impairment of drugs or alcohol while on club property. This also includes prescription medicine.
- The **only** place permitted for the consumption of an alcoholic beverage is upstairs, inside the classroom, or outside on the cement porch.
- Alcoholic beverages shall not be consumed before or during any shooting activity.
- No person is permitted to consume any alcoholic beverage beyond the legal limit of intoxication.
- No person is allowed to operate any motor vehicle while on club property after being presumed to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

VEHICLES AND LICENSES

- All vehicles that enter the property of the club must be properly registered, insured, and operated safely at all times.
- Members or guests that operate motor vehicles while on the property of the club must be properly licensed to operate their respective motor vehicles.
- All vehicles shall drive only on the existing roadways and park only in designated areas.
- Any vehicular accidents must be reported to a Board Member. If there is any injury, follow the emergency protocol.

CLUB HOUSE

- No smoking is allowed in the clubhouse.
- No handling of loaded firearms in the clubhouse.
- Please clean up after yourself and if the trash barrels are full, please empty them into the dumpster.
- It **shall** be the responsibility of any instructors or group that use or rent the club house or facilities to properly clean and return to prior condition the club house/facilities as it was before the event took place.
- A representative of the group or entity and a representative of the club will inspect the club house and note the condition(s) before and after any event.

- It is the responsibility of all members to keep the clubhouse and facilities clean.

FIREARM AND AMMUNITION RESTRICTIONS

- Incendiary, explosive and armor piercing rounds are not permitted on any range.
- Fully automatic firearm use is permitted only on the rifle range with prior notification to and permission by an executive officer. Only individuals properly licensed to possess and operate such firearms are permitted to use them.
- Caliber restrictions for all ranges are posted and must be followed.

INDOOR RANGE

- The Indoor pistol range is open for member use 24/7, except for times it may be closed due to a class or reserved for a training or activity. These times are posted on the website calendar.
- All shooters must follow the NRA's 11 Rules of Gun Safety. **(Attached)**
- All shooters must wear eye and ear protection.
- Always turn on the ventilation system.
- **Only** paper and cardboard targets are permitted in the Indoor Range.
- PLEASE operate the target hangers slowly.
- **Only approved calibers may be used.**
- Shoot so that the bullet only goes into the rubber backstop.
- Targets may only be placed in the target holders
- Minimum distance from firing line is 7 yds. If shooting closer than 7 yds. run the target to the backstop and go downrange. **Never go down range until the safety light is turned on.**
- If there are multiple shooters, please make known your need to go downrange. Once all shooters are in agreement, put on the safety light. Announce "cease fire the range is cold", and visually ensure that all firearms have been made safe. Only then may you go down range. When finished return to the shooting line. It is your responsibility to shut off the light and announce "the range is hot". Guns now may be loaded and shooting resumed.
- When someone is going down range all other shooters are to make their guns safe. This means magazines out, guns unloaded, actions opened, and guns placed on the shelf with the ejection port facing up and with the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Then step away from the firing line. Never handle a firearm when someone is down range

- When leaving police your brass and clean up debris both at the firing line and down range. Take a full trash bag to the dumpster. Larger cardboard targets that don't fit in the trash barrel are to be placed in the dumpster.
- Immediately report to a member of the Board of Directors any injury, damage or mishandling of a firearm incident.

OUTDOOR HANDGUN RANGES

- Open for member use from 8:30 am to dusk (Monday through Saturday); 10:00 am to dusk (Sunday). A specific range may be closed due to a class or reserved for a training or activity. These times are posted on the website calendar.
- All shooters must follow the NRA's 11 Rules of Gun Safety. **Attached**
- All shooters must wear ear and eye protection while using the range.
- Please always be aware of other shooters and onlookers to make sure that they are properly wearing their ear and eye protection before you fire.
- Only approved calibers may be used. Signs are posted at each range outlining what types of guns are allowed on specific ranges.
- Shooters may fire from the firing line, or go on the range to shoot at closer distance, **BUT these two types of shooting may not be done on the same range at the same time.**
- Never go in front of the firing line or downrange until you have made sure it is completely safe to do so.
- If there are multiple shooters using a range: Please communicate with others present your need to go in front of the firing line or down range. Once all shooters are in agreement, announce "Cease fire the range is cold", and visually ensure that all firearms have been made safe. This means magazines out, guns unloaded, actions opened, and guns placed on the shelf with the ejection port facing up and with the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Then step away from the firing line. Never handle a firearm when someone is down range. Once all individuals are back at the shooting line and there is no one on the range, the firing line may go "hot" again. Guns now may be loaded and shooting resumed.
- Only paper, cardboard, or Board of Director approved steel targets shall be used in the outdoor handgun ranges.
- Place paper targets on the target boards within the red border, not on the target frames.
- NO incendiary or explosive rounds are allowed on any range.

- NO Exploding or "Reporting" targets--whether homemade or commercially produced, such as Tannerite--are allowed.
- NO full auto firing at any pistol range. (Fully automatic weapons may **only** be fired or possessed by licensed personnel, **only** on the rifle range, and **only** after notifying an Executive Officer or Board Member for permission.
- In certain circumstances a law enforcement entity or group who has rented the facility may use shotguns in the Outdoor Handgun Range under strict supervision.
- Hanging targets must be hung so bullets will not strike the cable. Use a target holder to hold targets so all bullets go safely into the berm.
- Do not climb onto the berms.
- Pick up all brass and put into the bucket provided
- All debris, including targets, wood, paper and cardboard must be picked up and put into the trash barrels provided. If a trash barrel is full, please empty it into the dumpster.
- Immediately report to a member of the Board of Directors any injury, damage or mishandling of a firearm incident.

Outdoor Rifle Range

- Open for member use from 8:30 am to dusk (Monday through Saturday); 10:00 am to dusk (Sunday), except for times range may be closed due to a class or reserved for a training or activity. These times are posted on the website calendar.
- All shooters must follow the NRA's 11 Rules of Gun Safety. **Attached**
- All shooters must wear ear and eye protection while using the range.
- Please always be aware of other shooters and onlookers to make sure that they are properly wearing their ear and eye protection before you fire.
- Only approved calibers may be used. Signs are posted at each range outlining what types of guns are allowed on specific ranges.
- ALWAYS turn on the red safety lights before you or anyone else goes in front of the firing line or goes downrange. This applies even when there is no one else around!
- Never go in front of the firing line or downrange until you have made sure it is completely safe to do so.
- If there are multiple shooters using a range: Please communicate with others present your need to go in front of the firing line or downrange. Once all shooters are in agreement, announce "Cease fire the range is cold", and visually ensure that all firearms have been made safe. This means magazines out, guns unloaded, actions opened, and guns placed on the benches with the ejection port facing up and with the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Then step away from the firing line. Never handle a firearm when

someone is down range. Once all individuals are back at the shooting line and there is no one on the range, the red safety lights must be turned off and the firing line may go "hot" again. Guns now may be loaded and shooting resumed.

- Only paper, cardboard, or Board of Director approved steel targets may be used in the outdoor handgun ranges.
- Place paper targets on the target boards within the red border, not on the target frames. All targets must be at least 4 feet off the ground.
- Do not shoot at poles or place targets on poles.
- Only shoot *breakable* targets such as clay birds or water filled plastic jugs or other such Board of Director authorized targets on the 200 yard berm and right hand 100 yard berm.
- Place targets so that each and every bullet goes into the berm and not over the berm or into the lawn.
- Shoot only in your lane. Do not shoot diagonally across the range.
- NO incendiary or explosive rounds are allowed on any range.
- NO exploding or "Reporting" targets--whether homemade or commercially produced, such as Tannerite--are allowed.
- Fully automatic weapons may **only** be fired or possessed by licensed personnel, **only** on the rifle range, and **only** after notifying an Executive Officer or Board Member for permission.
- Do not climb onto the berms.
- Pick up all brass and put into the bucket provided
- All debris, including targets, wood, paper and cardboard must be picked up and put into the trash barrels provided. If a trash barrel is full, please empty it into the dumpster.
- Immediately report to a member of the Board of Directors any injury, damage or mishandling of a firearm incident.

Archery

- Any member or properly registered guest of a member may shoot archery on the designated archery range **only** and must make sure of the backstop and what is beyond.
- All arrows in bows must be pointed in a safe direction at all times.
- If there are multiple shooters using a range: Please communicate with others present your need to go in front of the firing line or downrange. Once all shooters are in agreement, announce "Cease fire the range is cold", and visually ensure that all bows and arrows are set down, before going downrange. Once all individuals are back at the

shooting line and there is no one on the range, the firing line may go “hot” again. Archery shooting may now be resumed.

Trap and Skeet

- Open for member use at the designated times posted on the website calendar.
- Fees for skeet and trap are: \$3.00 per Round of Skeet (Members) \$4.00 per Round of Skeet (Guests).
- All guest must sign the club's liability Waiver. As they are paying the guest fee for skeet, they are not required to pay the standard \$10 guest fee.
- All shooters must follow the NRA's 11 Rules of Gun Safety. **Attached.**
- All shooters must wear ear and eye protection while using the range.
- Please always be aware of other shooters and onlookers to make sure that they are properly wearing their ear and eye protection before you fire.
- All shotguns must remain unloaded and with actions open until it is the shooter's turn to fire.
- Do not shoot at the trap or skeet houses.
- All empty shells must be picked up and all debris properly disposed of.
- Immediately report to a member of the Board of Directors any injury, damage or mishandling of a firearm incident.

The rules, regulations, and policies in this document are to protect members and their guests while engaging in activities on club property. These rules, regulations, and policies safeguard the club for current and future members to use and enjoy.

INDOOR PISTOL RANGE

YES

- ♦ **STANDARD*** HANDGUN CALIBERS .45 AND SMALLER
- ♦ .22 CALIBER RIFLES
- ♦ PELLET GUNS
- ♦ ARCHERY (ONLY WHEN RANGE IS NOT BEING USED FOR FIREARMS)

*See Below

NO

- ♦ .41 & .44 REM MAG, .454 CASULL, .460 S&W, .480 RUGER, .50 MAGNUM
- ♦ ANY OTHER RIFLES
- ♦ SHOTGUNS
- ♦ BLACK POWDER

NOT ALLOWED ANYWHERE AT THE CLUB

- ♦ ARMOR PIERCING & INCENDIARY ROUNDS
- ♦ EXPLODING TARGETS
- ♦ FULLY AUTOMATIC FIREARMS WITHOUT BOARD APPROVAL

PISTOL RANGE # 3

YES

- ♦ **STANDARD*** HANDGUN CALIBERS .45 AND SMALLER
- ♦ **STANDARD*** HANDGUN CALIBER RIFLES & CARBINES
- ♦ .22 CALIBER RIFLES
- ♦ BLACK POWDER HANDGUNS
- ♦ SHOTGUNS WITH SHOT SIZES 4 THRU 9 ONLY

*See Below

NO

- ♦ .41 & .44 REM MAG, .454 CASULL, .460 S&W, .480 RUGER, .50 MAGNUM, .30 CARBINE
- ♦ ANY OTHER RIFLES

NOT ALLOWED ANYWHERE AT THE CLUB

- ♦ ARMOR PIERCING & INCENDIARY ROUNDS ♦ EXPLODING TARGETS
- ♦ FULLY AUTOMATIC FIREARMS WITHOUT BOARD APPROVAL

PISTOL RANGE # 2

YES

STEEL TARGETS

- ♦ **STANDARD*** HANDGUN CALIBERS .45 AND SMALLER
- ♦ .22 CALIBER RIFLES
- ♦ BLACK POWDER HANDGUNS

TARGET BOARDS

- ♦ ALL HANDGUN CALIBERS
- ♦ .22 CALIBER RIFLES
- ♦ BLACK POWDER HANDGUNS

*See Below

NO

STEEL TARGETS

- ♦ .41 & .44 REM MAG, .454 CASULL, .460 S&W, .480 RUGER, .50 MAGNUM, .30 CARBINE
- ♦ ANY OTHER RIFLES
- ♦ SHOTGUNS

TARGET BOARDS

- ♦ ANY OTHER RIFLES
- ♦ SHOTGUNS

NOT ALLOWED ANYWHERE AT THE CLUB

- ♦ ARMOR PIERCING & INCENDIARY ROUNDS ♦ EXPLODING TARGETS
- ♦ FULLY AUTOMATIC FIREARMS WITHOUT BOARD APPROVAL

PISTOL RANGE # 1

YES

STEEL TARGETS

- ♦ **STANDARD*** HANDGUN CALIBERS .45 AND SMALLER
- ♦ .22 CALIBER RIFLES
- ♦ BLACK POWDER HANDGUNS

TARGET BOARDS

- ♦ ALL HANDGUN CALIBERS
- ♦ .22 CALIBER RIFLES
- ♦ BLACK POWDER HANDGUNS

*See Below

NO

STEEL TARGETS

- ♦ .41 & .44 REM MAG, .454 CASULL, .460 S&W, .480 RUGER, .50 MAGNUM, .30 CARBINE
- ♦ ANY OTHER RIFLES
- ♦ SHOTGUNS

TARGET BOARDS

- ♦ ANY OTHER RIFLES
- ♦ SHOTGUNS

NOT ALLOWED ANYWHERE AT THE CLUB

- ♦ ARMOR PIERCING & INCENDIARY ROUNDS ♦ EXPLODING TARGETS
- ♦ FULLY AUTOMATIC FIREARMS WITHOUT BOARD APPROVAL

RIFLE RANGE

YES

- ♦ RIFLES OF ANY CALIBER
- ♦ BLACK POWDER
- ♦ SHOTGUN SLUG OR BUCKSHOT

NO

- ♦ FULLY AUTOMATIC FIREARMS WITHOUT BOARD APPROVAL
- ♦ ARMOR PIERCING & INCENDIARY ROUNDS
- ♦ EXPLODING TARGETS

OTHER RULES TO REMEMBER

- ♦ DO NOT MOVE 50 YARD TARGET BOARDS
- ♦ NO CROSS-RANGE SHOOTING
- ♦ RED BEACONS MUST BE ACTIVATED ANYTIME SOMEONE GOES DOWNRANGE

50 YARD RIFLE & PISTOL RANGE

YES

Target boards

- All Handguns
- All Rifles
- All Black Powder Guns
- All Shotguns (Please try to limit use so club target boards last longer)

Steel Targets

- Standard Handgun Calibers .45 and Smaller
- Standard Handgun Caliber Rifles and Carbines
- .22 Rimfire Rifles
- Black Powder Handguns
- Shotguns with shot sizes #4 through # 9 only

NO

Steel Targets

- Any Rifles or Carbines other than .22 Rimfire or Pistol Caliber
- Pistols: .41 & .44 Rem Mag; .454 Casull; .460 S&W; .480 Ruger; .50 Magnum; .30 Carbine
- Shotgun Slug or Buckshot

STEEL TARGETS FROM THE STEEL SHED MAY BE SET UP ON THIS RANGE FOR USE AS LISTED ABOVE.

ALL STEEL USED ON THIS RANGE MUST BE PUT AWAY AFTER USE.

NOT ALLOWED ANYWHERE AT THE CLUB

- Armor Piercing & Incendiary Rounds
- Exploding Targets
- Fully Automatic Firearms Without Board Approval

(From the National Rifle Association Website)

The fundamental NRA rules for safe gun handling are:

1. ALWAYS keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.

This is the primary rule of gun safety. A safe direction means that the gun is pointed so that even if it were to go off it would not cause injury or damage. The key to this rule is to control where the muzzle or front end of the barrel is pointed at all times. Common sense dictates the safest direction, depending on different circumstances.

2. ALWAYS keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.

When holding a gun, rest your finger on the trigger guard or along the side of the gun. Until you are actually ready to fire, do not touch the trigger.

3. ALWAYS keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.

Whenever you pick up a gun, immediately engage the safety device if possible, and, if the gun has a magazine, remove it before opening the action and looking into the chamber(s) which should be clear of ammunition. If you do not know how to open the action or inspect the chamber(s), leave the gun alone and get help from someone who does.

When using or storing a gun, always follow these NRA rules:

- **Know your target and what is beyond.**
Be absolutely sure you have identified your target beyond any doubt. Equally important, be aware of the area beyond your target. This means observing your prospective area of fire before you shoot. Never fire in a direction in which there are people or any other potential for mishap. Think first. Shoot second.
- **Know how to use the gun safely.**
Before handling a gun, learn how it operates. Know its basic parts, how to safely open and close the action and remove any ammunition from the gun or magazine. Remember, a gun's mechanical safety device is never foolproof. Nothing can ever replace safe gun handling.
- **Be sure the gun is safe to operate.**
Just like other tools, guns need regular maintenance to remain operable. Regular cleaning and proper storage are a part of the gun's general upkeep. If there is any question concerning a gun's ability to function, a knowledgeable gunsmith should look at it.
- **Use only the correct ammunition for your gun.**
Only BBs, pellets, cartridges or shells designed for a particular gun can be fired safely in that gun. Most guns have the ammunition type stamped on the barrel. Ammunition can be identified by information printed on the box and sometimes stamped on the cartridge. Do not shoot the gun

unless you know you have the proper ammunition.

- **Wear eye and ear protection as appropriate.**

Guns are loud and the noise can cause hearing damage. They can also emit debris and hot gas that could cause eye injury. For these reasons, shooting glasses and hearing protectors should be worn by shooters and spectators.

- **Never use alcohol or over-the-counter, prescription or other drugs before or while shooting.**

Alcohol, as well as any other substance likely to impair normal mental or physical bodily functions, must not be used before or while handling or shooting guns.

- **Store guns so they are not accessible to unauthorized persons.**

Many factors must be considered when deciding where and how to store guns. A person's particular situation will be a major part of the consideration. Dozens of gun storage devices, as well as locking devices that attach directly to the gun, are available. However, mechanical locking devices, like the mechanical safeties built into guns, can fail and should not be used as a substitute for safe gun handling and the observance of all gun safety rules.

- **Be aware that certain types of guns and many shooting activities require additional safety precautions.**

- **Cleaning**

Regular cleaning is important in order for your gun to operate correctly and safely. Taking proper care of it will also maintain its value and extend its life. Your gun should be cleaned every time that it is used.

A gun brought out of prolonged storage should also be cleaned before shooting. Accumulated moisture and dirt, or solidified grease and oil, can prevent the gun from operating properly.

Before cleaning your gun, **make absolutely sure that it is unloaded.** The gun's action should be open during the cleaning process. Also, be sure that **no ammunition is present in the cleaning area.**

"THE SKILLS AND ATTITUDE FOR SAFE GUN HANDLING"

By Adam Williams, Massachusetts Basic Firearms Safety Instructor, NRA Home Firearms Safety Instructor, NRA Basic Pistol Instructor, NRA Range Safety Officer, Graduate: Gunsite Academy, 250 Defensive Pistol, FCSC Member

Virtually all gun accidents can be traced back to ignorance or carelessness on the part of the user. None of us want to be labeled with one of these characteristics, but I hope that we can all take a look in the mirror for just a moment, and honestly assess how confident we are in our safety practices on the range. Never lose sight of the fact that you own every single round fired from your gun, and you are responsible for it safely coming to rest. Whether you feel that you might need a little refresher on firearm safety, or you've witnessed what I'm talking about on the range, please read on.

IGNORANCE AND CARELESSNESS

The aim of fundamental safety rules is to avoid the dreaded **NEGLIGENT DISCHARGE**, a round being fired unintentionally. Perhaps the loudest sound you'll ever hear is the bang that happens when you were expecting a click...or worse, not expecting anything. Depending on when, or how, a negligent discharge happens, it could potentially damage property (like the light fixture in the indoor pistol range), it could injure the shooter, or in the worst case scenario result in the injury or death of someone else on the range—not something you would recover from, legally or emotionally. As gun owners and shooters, it is our responsibility to insure that this doesn't happen. That means that if there is any doubt in your mind as to whether or not you possess enough knowledge to be certain that your range practices are safe, then you **MUST** actively seek more.

IGNORANCE is defined as a lack of knowledge. When it comes to firearms, there is always more to learn, but most of us are more likely to spend our money on a new gun, or more ammunition, than we are to spend it on quality training or education. Many shooters have not had a firearms class of any kind since the safety class they took to get their license 5 or more years ago. Fortunately, there are many qualified people to learn from in our club, including several NRA certified instructors and Range Safety Officers. Keep an eye out for information in the coming months for basic skills and safety classes being offered at the club, and sign up for one, short of that, keep your eyes open for talented and safe shooters on the range and seek mentorship if you need or want it. Seeking education is the only way to combat ignorance, and the potential accidents that are associated with it.

CARELESSNESS is a lack of the proper **ATTITUDE** around firearms. Even if you are lacking some skills, approaching firearms with the proper attitude will keep you out of trouble for the most part. We must cultivate an attitude of extreme respect for what guns are capable of, and always handle them with that capability in mind. It takes a lot of discipline to check, and double check the condition of our firearm again and again while on the range, and to always handle it properly, and having that discipline is your duty as a responsible gun owner. Again, take a moment for a little self-reflection, and try to be honest about whether or not you need to work on cultivating a more careful attitude.

SEVEN...POTENTIALLY...DEADLY SINS

First, a quick review of the three fundamental safety rules for safe gun handling

1. **Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction** - don't point the muzzle at anything you're not will to kill, break, or buy.
2. **Keep your finger off of the trigger until your sights are on the target** - Your finger stays out of the trigger guard until the muzzle is pointed at something you mean to destroy.
3. **Always keep the gun unloaded until ready to use** - Do not load the firearm until the moment you are ready to use it.

DEADLY SIN #1 - FAILURE TO CONDITION CHECK (safety rule number 3) - It seems crazy that someone could be so careless as to be unaware that their firearm is loaded, but I see it happen often. Every time you pick up a firearm you must take a few seconds to check whether or not it is loaded. **Step 1 - Remove the magazine.** If the firearm is magazine fed, simply remove the mag. **Step 2 - Open the action.** Whether handling a semi-auto pistol or a break-action shotgun, simply open the action. **Step 3 - Visually and physically inspect the chamber.** Verify by sight and touch that there is no round in the chamber. Perform this simple check every time you handle a firearm... **EVERY TIME.** For an example of the consequences, check out this video of a police officer in a gun store demonstrating carelessness and failing to condition check a pistol...and also not keeping the muzzle pointed in a safe

direction, and also not keeping his finger off of the trigger. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIAOWIRwhw>

DEADLY SIN #2 - THE PREEMPTIVE LOAD (safety rule #3) - Here's an example I've witnessed often. A shooter on the pistol range is at the 10 yard line conducting slow fire. Another shooter is back at the shed loading a magazine. The shooter at the shed loads the magazine in the gun and racks the slide, then (sometimes with a finger inside the trigger guard) walks up to the line behind the other shooter. Imagine if he stumbled and accidentally clenched his hand in response. NEVER LOAD UNTIL THE MOMENT YOU ARE READY TO USE THE GUN. For a great example of this rule, visit the skeet field on the weekends, and watch how none of the shooters load their shotguns until they are standing on the station and ready to call "PULL!" But it was pointed at the ground, you might say... well, see DEADLY SIN #3. KEEP YOUR GUN UNLOADED AND YOUR ACTION OPEN WHEN YOU APPROACH OR LEAVE THE LINE. If you have a holster and are familiar with its safe use, then this is also a good option. Keep in mind though that many accidents happen when drawing from a holster or reholstering, due to ignorance about how to do so safely. If you're not sure what I mean, then seek more training.

DEADLY SIN #3 - THE DANGLE (safety rules number 1 and 3) - The dangle is a bad habit I see more than almost any other, and it's specific to pistol shooters. Dangling is holding a loaded firearm at your side. This happens often when a shooter takes a couple of shots, but does not empty the gun, and then approaches the target to inspect their hits while dangling the pistol at their side, often with their finger inside the trigger guard. Said shooter then turns and walks back to the line with the pistol casually dangling. It wouldn't take much for a negligent discharge in this scenario, and that discharge would likely result in a hole in your leg or foot, or even a round headed up range toward bystanders. KEEP YOUR GUN UNLOADED AND YOUR ACTION OPEN WHEN YOU APPROACH OR LEAVE THE LINE.

DEADLY SIN #4 - THE DROP - We are all human, and that makes us fallible. Despite our best efforts it's possible to drop a firearm accidentally. If you have a deadly tool in your hand, be sure that you have it under control. Also, there are gun handling mistakes that can increase the chance of dropping your firearm, particularly if it's a pistol. If you don't know what gun handling mistakes I mean, then you need more training. Examples include running the slide on a semi-auto pistol like a slingshot (pinching it between the thumb and forefinger) and switching hands to perform reloads. **IF YOU ACCIDENTALLY DROP YOUR GUN, DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CATCH IT.** Modern firearms are built with drop safety mechanisms, for the most part, and if you attempt to catch it you risk accidentally grabbing and pulling the trigger.

DEADLY SIN #5 - THE PICK UP (safety rules numbers 1 and 2) - It goes something like this: you are standing on the line, maybe working on your marksmanship, or shooting a new gun. Maybe you lose track of how many rounds you've fired, or you walk up to the target (deadly sin number 3) and then return to the line, or maybe you have a malfunction, regardless of the reason, you rack the slide of your pistol unnecessarily, and a live round ejects and hits the ground. Be honest, would you bend down and pick it up? If so, would you unload and open the action on your pistol first? I've seen numerous shooters bend down to pick up a live round, or a fumbled magazine and unintentionally point their loaded pistol right at their own head. **NEVER PICK UP ANYTHING OFF OF THE GROUND UNTIL YOU HAVE MADE YOUR GUN SAFE (MAGAZINE OUT AND ACTION OPEN).**

DEADLY SIN #6 - SHOW AND TELL (safety rules numbers 1, 2, and 3) - Show and tell is exactly what it sounds like. We all love our guns, we invest a lot of money in them, and we all agree that they are awesome. This results in an almost uncontrollable desire to show them off, and when we do this, a perfect storm of bad safety habits ensues. For whatever reason, if someone at a range or a gun store pulls out a gun, or hands it us, we tend to take it on faith that the gun is in a safe condition. **WE FAIL TO CONDITION CHECK IT.** Never hand someone a

gun without verifying that it is empty, and never take one from someone without verifying that it is empty-- **WE FAIL TO KEEP IT POINTED IN A SAFE DIRECTION**--because we ASSUME it's safe, we exercise poor muzzle control--**AND, WE FAIL TO KEEP OUR FINGER OFF OF THE TRIGGER**--again, based on our ASSUMPTION of safety we grab the trigger to get a better feel for the gun we are supposed to be impressed by. Spend some time thinking about this one. Some of the most careless gun handling I've ever seen happens in gun stores and meeting places around the range. Keep your gun holstered, and if you absolutely must show it to someone because it just the most awesome thing you've ever seen, then do it on the shooting line and follow the three fundamental safety rules in the process.

DEADLY SIN #7 - PERHAPS THE DEADLIEST OF ALL - BOOGER HOOK ON THE BANG SWITCH - We all know that guns fire when the trigger is pulled. That is precisely why the best way to avoid a negligent discharge is to keep your finger off of the trigger unless your sights are on target. Surprisingly, this requires some practice, and I regularly witness shooters walking around the various ranges with their finger in the trigger guard. Negligent discharges can occur when manipulating the gun (such as loading or unloading), when drawing from a holster, or reholstering, or due to sympathetic response and interlimb interaction. In short, if your finger is on the trigger as you walk to the line, and you stumble or slip, you will clench your hands and fire a round. In fact, it is often enough to witness someone else stumbling for our sympathetic nervous system to respond and clench our hands. **KEEP YOUR FINGER OFF OF THE TRIGGER AT ALL TIMES UNLESS YOUR SIGHTS ARE ON TARGET AND YOUR EYES ARE ON THE SIGHTS. IF YOU REMEMBER NOTHING ELSE FROM THIS ARTICLE, REMEMBER THIS--KEEP YOUR BOOGER HOOK OFF OF THE BANG SWITCH.**