

# **N-SSA**



## **Procedures for Safety Officers**

# **Introduction**

One of the most important duties of the host teams at a National Skirmish is ensuring the safety of the competitors by providing safety officers to monitor individual matches. This booklet is intended to spell out the duties of the line safety and instruct them on proper procedures for performing their duties.

## **Duties of a Safety Officer during Individual Matches**

It is the safety officer's job to observe and monitor all aspects of firearms handling during individual matches to help eliminate possible accidents. In addition, the safety officer has other duties not directly related to the loading, shooting, and clearing of firearms. In performing the job, the safety officer will:

1. Monitor competitors' loading procedures,
2. Clear all firearms firing on his/her assigned positions,
3. Ground fouled or malfunctioning firearms during the relay,
4. Signal the tower, using the green/red safety flag,
5. Maintain general safety on the range side of the fence line,
6. Assist members of the Inspector General's staff in conducting random inspections, and
7. Remove targets at the end of each individual relay.

### **1. Monitoring Competitors' Loading Procedures**

It is the duty of the safety officer to monitor loading procedures. This includes the snapping of caps before loading, through the loading and firing of each shot, and ending with the final clearing of the firearm from the line.

#### **Snapping caps**

The snapping of caps before loading is not required; however, if the competitor does snap caps, the first cap snapped must be fired downrange from the shoulder.

## **Loading Muzzleloading Arms (Muskets, Smoothbores, Musketoons)**

All loading procedures for muzzleloading arms must be done in accordance with N-SSA Skirmish Rules Sections 25.2 and 25.2.1.

Loading shall commence with the butt of the firearm on the ground or on the foot, with the hammer down.

Powder charges shall be placed in the muzzle so that the hand does not remain in the line of fire.

Projectiles shall be held between forefinger and thumb and placed in the muzzle so that the hand does not enter the line of fire. No part of the body shall be used to start the bullet into the bore. The palm of the hand shall not be placed over the end of the rammer while ramming.

If the rammer is returned to the piece, it should be pulled down by the little finger, keeping the hand out of the line of fire.

The ramrod shall not be placed flat on the ground between shots and at no time shall it be placed in a location that would necessitate or permit the competitor to place his/her body or head in front of the muzzle while loading. The ramrod may be held in the hand, leaned against the body, stuck in the top of a shoe or boot, leaned against a bayonet or edged weapon of the period, or stuck in the ground rather than being returned to the piece between shots. No other ramrod holders are permitted.

The arm shall not be capped or primed until the loading procedure has been completed.

Smoothbore projectiles are to be round ball only. The ball may be wrapped with aluminum foil, with or without grease. The use of paper or cloth patches or over powder wads is prohibited. (Rule 17.1.1).

In loading a flintlock arm, all of the previous procedures are to be followed in addition to:

Before loading, the leather frizzen cover must be placed over the frizzen. This cover must remain in place until the loading process is complete and the arm is at the horizontal and ready for priming (Rule 25.2.1.a). The priming powder must be part of a prepared charge, but separate from that of the main charge. No priming horns or other such container is permitted (Rule 17.6.d). An additional required safety feature on flintlocks is that the arm must be equipped with a flash guard to protect the other competitors on the line (Rule 25.13.1).

### **Loading Single Shot Breechloading Firearms (Breechloading Carbines, Single Shot Cartridge Arms)**

All loading procedures for these arms must be in accordance with N-SSA Skirmish Rules Section 25.5.

Single shot Breechloading firearms may have cartridges made of metal, paper or plastic and may be internally or externally primed.

The arm must be held pointed downrange, with the barrel at or below the horizontal.

The cartridge will be inserted into the breech, and the breech then closed.

If the arm is externally primed, then it may be capped.

### **Loading the Henry Rifle**

All loading procedures for the Henry must be done in accordance with N-SSA Skirmish Rules Section 25.3.

The barrel of the firearm must be pointed downrange, in a near horizontal position, while loading.

During individual matches, the Henry must be loaded and fired with single rounds. The magazine shall not be used in individual match competition.

### **Loading the Spencer Rifle and Carbine**

All loading procedures for the Spencer must be done in accordance with N-SSA Skirmish Rules Section 25.4.

The barrel of the firearm must be pointed downrange in a near horizontal position during loading and reloading.

The Spencer magazine may be loaded or reloaded with a Blakeslee loading tube. Lacking the Blakeslee device, the firearm must be loaded singly with loose ammunition directly into the breech.

### **Loading Revolvers**

All loading procedures for revolvers must be done in accordance with N-SSA Skirmish Rules Section 25.6.

A revolver cylinder may be loaded in place or removed and loaded in a loading device. Filler or wads may be used in the chambers and all chambers must be greased.

The chambers shall not be capped until the revolver is on the firing line and the cylinder is in place in the revolver.

Capping devices may be used for revolvers.

### **General Loading Instructions**

The firearm should be brought to the shoulder as horizontally as possible and in such a manner that the line of fire from the muzzle does not point above the backstop.

All rounds must be loaded from prepared cartridges. The use of powder flasks or powder horns or loading from anything but prepared individual charges is prohibited. (Rule 17.5.b).

## **2. Clearing Firearms When Shooting Has Been Completed**

It is critical that every firearm leaving the line at the end of an individual relay has been cleared to determine that it is unloaded and safe. No firearm shall be allowed to leave the firing line until the clearing procedure has taken place.

### **Clearing a Muzzleloading Arm**

The safety officer shall observe the competitor as he/she fires two caps from the arm. The first cap must be fired downrange from the shoulder. The second cap must be fired at the safety flag, a blade of grass or dirt in the ground in advance of the firing line. (Rule 25.10).

### **Clearing Flintlock Arms**

The competitor shall prove that the arm is unloaded by placing the ramrod in the barrel and noting how much extends from the barrel. Then he/she shall withdraw the ramrod from the barrel and demonstrate that there is not a charge in the barrel by placing the ramrod alongside the barrel. The ramrod must extend at least to the touch hole (Rule 25.13).

### **Clearing Single Shot Breechloading Arms**

These arms shall be cleared by looking into the breech to observe that the chamber is unloaded. Following this, an inspection of the barrel must be made to observe that the barrel is clear. This inspection may be done by looking through the barrel from the breech end or by insertion of a cleaning rod through the muzzle until its tip is clearly observed in the breech opening of the arm.

### **Clearing Henry Rifles**

The competitor is to cycle the action, leaving it open. Check to make sure the follower is fully seated and can be seen moving inside the action. Have the competitor rotate the arm so the empty magazine tube may be observed through the slot. Check the bore by having the competitor insert a cleaning rod, dowel or similar device from the muzzle until the tip is observed in the breech opening of the arm (Rule 25.14). Make sure if anything other than a cleaning rod is used, that the item is removed from the firearm before releasing the competitor from the line.

## **Clearing Spencer Rifles and Carbines**

The competitor is to empty the arm of all cartridges and remove the magazine feeder tube. Check the magazine by having the competitor cycle the magazine twice and then look through the magazine tube from the butt plate. Check the bore by either looking through the barrel from the breech or by insertion of a cleaning rod from the muzzle until its tip is observed in the breech (Rule 25.15).

## **Clearing Revolvers**

Before retiring from the firing line, the competitor shall unload his/her revolver and place it on half-cock so it may be inspected. The cylinder must remain in the revolver during the clearing process. The safety officer shall check all nipples for unfired caps and chambers for unfired rounds (Rule 25.12).

### **3. Ground Fouled or Malfunctioning Firearms During a Relay**

Fouled or malfunctioning arms shall be dealt with in accordance with Sections 25.8 and 25.9 of the N-SSA Skirmish Rules. The safety officer may assist the ordnance staff in any way necessary to clear the firearm and keep the flow of the skirmish going.

#### **Clearing Firearms During a Relay**

If a competitor's arm becomes fouled or disabled during an individual event, he/she MAY use whatever means, tools, or parts as may be available to clear the arm or replace broken parts. Another individual may assist the competitor. The arm may NOT be cleared through the muzzle while on the firing line. If necessary, the arm may be cleared by the skirmish staff using a gas bottle during a relay, but only if there are no other competitors on the same firing position (Rule 25.8.2). If the arm is cleared during the relay, the competitor may continue to fire in the relay, or may finish firing during the next relay (Rule 12.6).

#### **Disabled Arms**

Do NOT show the red flag if a competitor's firearm becomes fouled during a relay. If the fouled arm cannot be cleared on the line, at the end of the relay show the red flag when the command comes from the tower asking if the line is clear. Arms that cannot be cleared by either the competitor or by a gas bottle shall be removed from the line by the

ordnance staff in a designated vehicle to a safe area set aside for that purpose.

### **Muzzleloading Arms**

Muzzleloading arms shall be flooded before being removed from the line. A ball puller then can be used to pull the projectile from the barrel.

### **Cartridge Arms**

If a breechloading arm firing self contained cartridges must be cleared by pushing a cartridge from the breech by inserting a rod through the bore via the muzzle, a rag or patch must be placed in such a position as would prevent the primer from being struck against the firing pin.

### **Revolvers**

If a disabled revolver cannot be fired, it must be cleared in the following manner:

Remove the cylinder only after the safety officer checks to see that there are no live caps on the cylinder.

Remove the nipple from each fouled chamber.

Empty as much powder as will flow out.

Flood the chamber.

Push the projectile out from the rear or pull it with a ball puller.

### **Disqualification of a Fouled Firearm**

If a firearm has been fouled/disabled and cleared three (3) times in one skirmish, including individual and company matches, it shall be declared unfit for competition and may not be used again in that skirmish (Rule 25.9.4).

## **4. Signal the Tower Using the Green/Red Safety Flag**

The safety officer shall have the green flag showing at the beginning of and during the relay to show the tower that there is nobody forward of the firing line and it is safe to shoot.

During a relay, the red flag is to be shown only in cases of immediate danger, such as the sighting of people or livestock on the backstop or in the line of fire.

A safety officer shall not stop a relay for a fouled or malfunctioning firearm, but shall act as outlined in Section 3 of this manual.

## **5. Maintain General Safety on the Range Side of the Fence**

### **Main Range**

No smoking or the carrying of lighted smoking materials is allowed on the range side of the fence, and all shooting boxes must be closed and five (5) feet in front of the fence.

There shall be no open flame of any kind in front of the safety line or fence of the range. Skirmishers who use open flame to black the sights of their firearms must be behind the safety line to do so (Rule 20.4).

The firing line is a straight line between the position markers. Competitors may straddle the firing line but must not have more than one foot forward of it during either individual or company match competition. The penalty for violation shall be disqualification under Rules 22.10 and 22.11. (Rule 26.2)

### **Revolver Range**

No smoking or the carrying of lighted smoking materials is allowed on the range side of the fence.

There shall be no open flame of any kind in front of the safety line or fence of the range. Skirmishers who use open flame to black the sights of their firearms must be behind the safety line to do so (Rule 20.4).

All loading gear and shooting kits shall be placed on or under the loading bench. Shooters shall stand behind the loading bench for loading and shooting.

There shall be no open powder containers on the loading bench. Loading shall be done from sealed containers, each holding one premeasured charge.

## **6. Assisting the Inspector General's Staff**

The IG randomly selects 'positions' to be inspected during each relay of individuals. Upon direction of the IG, the safety officer shall assist in the random inspection, but at no time is the IG Corps to interfere with or distract any competitor unless the issue is of immediate safety.

The IG will usually approach the safety officer to inform him/her that a drawn inspection will be taking place on a position.

When the competitor is finished firing, the safety officer will clear the arm using the prescribed measures in this booklet.

Once the arm is cleared, the safety officer will release the competitor into the custody of the IG staff for inspection.

## **7. Removing Targets at the End of Each Relay**

It is the duty of the safety officer to remove competitors' targets once the relay has ended and the line has been cleared. At no time is a competitor to remove his/her own target from the backer.

In performing this job, the safety officer should remove all staples in the targets, to prevent injury to other members of the skirmish staff.

When removing targets from the backers, make sure the target being removed has been shot.

It is a good idea to have a set of needle nose pliers, thin blade screwdriver or pocket knife to assist in removing staples.

In removing the targets, please try not to tear or otherwise damage the shot target.

## **General Rules of Competition**

When an individual target and/or backer blows from the frame during a relay, the shooter may be granted an alibi if to the satisfaction of the Individual Match Officer or Skirmish Director, the target was not blown off due to the carelessness of the shooter. If an alibi is granted, the shooter must complete the number of unfired rounds in the next relay of the same time duration. An alibi shall not be granted if the shooter cannot find the target that was blown off the frame (Rule 12.7).

Competitors are to fire from the same numbered position on which the target is posted (Rule 12.9).

Staples are not to be placed in any part of the scoring area of the target (Rule 12.8).

During the match, all loading and firing must be done by the competitor. Assistance is permitted from behind the firing line as long as it does not interfere with other competitors (Rule 22.3.2).

A competitor may have one coach, as long as the coaching does not interfere with other competitors (Rule 22.3.1).

A competitor may have the help of a spotter, as long as the spotting does not interfere with other competitors (Rule 22.5.1).

All revolvers shall be fired by holding the revolver in one hand only. The other arm cannot be used in any way to support the revolver or shooting arm. No artificial supports are to be used (Rule 22.17.1).

The firing line is a straight line between the position markers that may be straddled, but no more than one foot may be forward of it during competition. (Rule 26.2)

## **General Courtesy**

Be attentive to what is going on at the positions you are monitoring. Your primary job is to watch the shooters.

Be ready to clear a competitor's firearm when requested.

Please do not engage in conversations with others during a relay that might distract shooters while they are firing a match. This includes conversations with competitors when you are clearing their firearms.

If you should spot an infraction in any of the safety rules, bring it to the competitor's attention in a friendly, but firm, manner. Try not to do it while the competitor is shooting, unless the infraction causes an immediate safety issue for the competitor or those surrounding him/her.

# SAFETY MANUAL - QUICK REFERENCE

## General Duties of a Safety Officer

1. Monitor competitors' loading procedures
2. Clear all firearms firing on his/her assigned positions
3. Ground fouled or malfunctioning firearms during the relay
4. Signal the tower, using the green/red safety flag
5. Maintain general safety on the range side of the fence line
6. Assist members of the Inspector General's staff in conducting random inspections
7. Remove targets at the end of each individual relay

## Tips

1. Keep your eyes on shooters, not targets.
2. Do not raise a red flag until the end of the relay unless an immediate cessation of fire for the entire range is needed.
3. Competitors must have at least 1 foot completely behind the firing line.
4. Watch muzzles during loading/reaching for ramrods or discharging rounds after the buzzer – no skying.
5. Watch for hands/thumbs over the muzzle while pouring powder or placing the bullet in the muzzle – no 'thumbing' the bullet.
6. Snapping caps is not required at the start of a relay, but if done, the first cap must be fired downrange, not at the ground.
7. When being cleared, a cap must first be fired from the shoulder, then a cap must be fired at the ground/flag such that it causes movement.
8. Henry rifles must be loaded with single rounds.

9. Spencer arms may be loaded/reloaded only with a Blakeslee loading tube, or singly with loose ammo.
10. Fouled arms:
  - a. Arms may be cleared by whatever means necessary EXCEPT through the muzzle.
  - b. If the arm is cleared, the competitor may continue that relay or finish on the next relay.
11. Competitors may have assistance/coaching/spotting from behind the firing line if it doesn't interfere with others, but all loading/firing must be done by the competitor.
12. The Safety must always be courteous when immediate attention is needed to correct a dangerous situation, e.g.:
  - a. The muzzle is pointed in an unsafe direction
  - b. Shooters leave the line without clearing their weapon

**BE COURTEOUS AND KEEP THE CHATTING TO A MINIMUM. DO NOT DISTRACT THE SHOOTERS!**

**IF YOU DO NOT KNOW PROCEDURE, ASK ANOTHER SAFETY OR LINE JUDGE, OR CONTACT ONE OF THE STAFF OFFICERS BELOW:**