

North-South Skirmish Association



Procedures for Safety Officers

March 1, 2023

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. Applicable rule numbers appear at the end of each statement.

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.

Safety Officers must inform competitors of safety violations and must stop unsafe practices when observed. (Rule 4.15.d)

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. (Rule 4.16)

Loading Muzzleloading Arms (Muskets, Smoothbores, Musketoons)

All loading procedures for muzzleloading arms must be done in accordance with N-SSA Skirmish Rules Sections 20.2 and 20.2.1.

Loading shall commence with the butt of the firearm on the ground or on the foot, with the hammer down on the last cap fired. (Rule 20.2.a)

Powder charges shall be placed in the muzzle so that the hand does not remain in the line of fire. (Rule 20.2.b)

Projectiles shall be held between forefinger and thumb and placed in the muzzle so that the hand does not enter the line of fire. (Rule 20.2.c)

No part of the body shall be used to start the bullet into the bore. (Rule 20.2.d)

The palm of the hand shall not be placed over the end of the rammer while ramming. (Rule 20.2.e)

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. (Rule 20.2.f)

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. (Rule 20.2.g)

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, leaned against a telescope stand, or stuck in the ground rather than being returned to the piece between shots. (Rule 20.2.h)

No other ramrod holders are permitted. (Rule 20.2.i)

The arm shall not be capped or primed until the loading procedure has been completed. (Rule 20.2.g)

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 22.1.1).

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

Before loading or reloading, the leather frizzen cover must be placed over the frizzen. (Rule 20.2.1.a)

The cover must remain in place until the loading process is complete and the arm is at the horizontal and ready to be primed (Rule 20.2.1.b).

After loading is complete and the arm is at the horizontal, the frizzen cover shall be removed and the priming charge poured into the pan. (Rule 20.2.1.e)

In the use of flintlock firearms, priming powder must be provided as part of a prepared cartridge but separate from the main charge. The use of priming horns or any other such container is prohibited. (Rule 22.6.d)

Flintlock arms must be equipped with a flash guard to direct the flash from the touch hole upwards. (Rule 20.14.1.a)

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 20.5.

Single shot Breechloading firearms may have cartridges made of metal, paper or plastic and may be either internally or externally primed. (Rule 20.5.a)

The arm must be held pointed downrange, with the barrel at or below the horizontal. (Rule 20.5.b)

The cartridge will be inserted into the breech, and the breech then closed. (Rule 20.5.c)

If the arm is externally primed, it will then be capped. (Rule 20.5.d)

Loading the Henry Rifle

All loading procedures for the Henry must be done in accordance with N-SSA Skirmish Rules Section 20.3.

The barrel of the firearm must be pointed downrange, in a near horizontal position, while loading. (Rule 20.3.a)

During individual matches, Henry firearms must be loaded and fired with single rounds. The magazine shall not be used in individual match competition. (Rule 20.3.e)

Loading the Spencer Rifle and Carbine

All loading procedures for the Spencer must be done in accordance with N-SSA Skirmish Rules Section 20.4.

The barrel of the firearm must be pointed downrange in a near horizontal position during loading and reloading. (Rule 20.4.a)

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. (Rule 20.4.b)

Loading Revolvers

All loading procedures for revolvers must be done in accordance with N-SSA Skirmish Rules Section 20.6.

A revolver cylinder may be loaded in place or removed and loaded in a loading device. (Rule 20.6.a)

Filler or wads may be used in the chambers and all chambers must be greased. (Rule 20.6.b)

All revolver projectiles are to be lubed. Round balls must be properly sized to the chamber and lube applied over top. Pre-lubricated conical projectiles must be sized to the chamber, and lube over top is optional. (Rule 20.6.c)

The chambers shall not be capped until the revolver is on the firing line and the cylinder is in place in the revolver. (Rules 20.6.d.1 & 2)

A capping device may be used for revolvers. (Rule 20.6.d.4)

Loading Single Shot Pistols (Percussion)

All loading procedures for single shot pistols must be done in accordance with N-SSA Skirmish Rules Section 20.7.1.

Loading shall commence with the butt of the arm placed in a loading stand with the hammer down on the last cap fired. (Rule 20.7.1.a)

Loading procedures are in accordance with standard safe muzzleloading firearm practices. (Rules 20.7.1.b thru h)

Single Shot Pistol (Flintlock)

All loading procedures for single shot flintlock pistols must be done in accordance with N-SSA Skirmish Rules Section 20.7.2

Before loading or reloading the leather frizzen cover must be placed over the frizzen. (Rule 20.7.2.a)

Loading shall commence with the butt of the arm placed in a loading stand. (Rule 20.7.1.a)

Loading procedures are in accordance with standard safe muzzleloading flintlock firearm practices.
(Rule 20.7.1 & 20.7.2)

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 22.5.c)

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 per rule 17.1.5.

Clearing a Muzzleloading Arm

The safety officer shall observe the competitor as he/she fires two caps from the arm. (Rule 20.11.i)

The first cap must be aimed downrange and fired from the shoulder, and the second while the firearm is pointed at a safety flag or at the ground in advance of the line. (Rule 20.11.i)

The safety officer shall observe that the second cap causes movement of the flag, or of grass or dirt on the ground. (Rule 20.11.j)

When the competitor has been inspected thus, the competitor shall be released from the firing line. (Rule 20.11.k)

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. (Rule 20.14.a)

The ramrod must extend at least to the touch hole (Rule 20.14.b).

Clearing Single Shot Breechloading Arms

These arms shall be cleared by looking through, or into, the breech to observe that the chamber is unloaded. (Rule 20.12.a)

Following this, an inspection of the barrel must be made to observe that the barrel is clear. (Rule 20.12.b)

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. (Rule 20.12.c)

Clearing Henry Rifles

Empty the arm of all cartridges, leaving the action open. (Rule 20.15.a)

Check the magazine by observing that the follower is fully seated and can be seen moving inside the action. (Rule 20.15.b)

Have the competitor rotate the arm so that the empty magazine tube may be observed through the slot. (Rule 20.15.c)

Check the bore by inserting a cleaning rod, dowel, or similar device from the muzzle until the tip is seen in the breech, thereby assuring that the barrel is clear. (Rule 20.15.d)

Clearing Spencer Arms

Empty the arm of all cartridges and remove the magazine feeder tube. (Rule 20.16.a)

Check the magazine by cycling the action twice and looking through the magazine tube from the butt plate. (Rule 20.16.b)

Check the bore, either by looking through the barrel from the breech, or by inserting a cleaning rod from the muzzle until the tip is seen in the breech. (Rule 20.16.c)

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 by the safety officer. (Rule 20.13.a)

The cylinder must remain in the revolver during the clearing process. (Rule 20.13.b)

The safety officer shall check all nipples for unfired caps and chambers for unfired rounds (Rule 20.13.c).

3. Ground Fouled or Malfunctioning Firearms During a Relay

Fouled or malfunctioning arms shall be dealt with in accordance with Sections 20.9 and 20.10 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. (Rule 20.9.2.a)

Another individual may assist the competitor. (Rule 20.9.2.b)

The arm may NOT be cleared through the muzzle while on the firing line. (Rule 20.9.2.c)

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 20.9.2.d).

If the arm is cleared and/or repaired during the relay, the competitor may continue the match on that relay, or may elect to finish the match on the next individual relay of the same duration. (Rule 12.6.b)

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

A muzzleloading arm must be flooded before a ball puller may be used to withdraw the ball. (Rule 20.10.1.c)

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. (Rule 20.10.2)

Revolvers

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

Method 1-

1. Remove the cylinder only after the Safety Officer checks to see that there are no live caps on the cylinder.
2. Then remove the nipple from each fouled chamber, empty as much powder as will flow out, flood the chamber, and push the ball out from the rear or pull it with a ball puller.

Method 2-

1. Remove the cylinder only after the Safety Officer verifies there are no live caps on the cylinder.
2. Using a cylinder rest placed on the bench, place the cylinder on the rest with the fouled chamber on top and its mouth facing downrange. Using a CO₂/air bottle, expel the powder charge and projectile from the fouled chamber. Repeat for each and every fouled chamber.
3. The Safety Officer shall then visibly inspect all of the cylinder's chambers before declaring the disabled revolver clear.

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 20.10.4).

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. 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.

The red flag must be raised in only TWO situations:

After the 'Cease Fire' command has been given from the tower, to inform the tower that there is a fouled arm on that position. (Rule 4.15.e.1)

During an event if there is a condition on that position that requires the immediate cessation of fire; for example, a medical emergency requiring the immediate attention of medical personnel. (Rule 4.15.e.2)

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

Main Range

Smoking and vaping is prohibited in front of the safety line. (Rule 39.1)

Shooting boxes and equipment must be no less than 10 feet behind the firing line and no less than 3 feet forward of the spectator line. (Rule 25.1.5.c)

There shall be no open flame of any kind in front of the safety line of the range. (Rule 17.4.a)

Skirmishers who use open flame to black the sights of their firearms must be behind the safety line to do so (Rule 17.4.b).

The firing line is a straight line between the position markers.
(Rule 25.1.1.a)

Competitors may stand with the forward foot on the firing line or may straddle it (stand with one foot forward and one foot completely behind), during company or individual match competition. (Rule 25.1.1.b)

Revolver Range

Smoking and vaping is prohibited in front of the safety line.
(Rule 39.1)

There shall be no open flame of any kind in front of the safety line or fence of the range. (Rule 17.4.a)

Skirmishers who use open flame to black the sights of their firearms must be behind the safety line to do so (Rule 17.4.b).

All loading gear and shooting kits shall be placed on or under the loading bench. (Rule 7.11.b.1)

Shooters shall stand behind the loading bench for loading and shooting. (Rule 7.11.b.2)

There shall be no open powder containers on the loading bench. (Rule 7.11.b.3)

Loading shall be done from sealed containers, each holding one premeasured charge. (Rule 7.11.b.4)

6. Assisting the Inspector General's Staff

The IG randomly selects 'positions' to be inspected during each relay of individuals under the directives in Section 21 of the N-SSA Skirmish Rules. 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 pocketknife to assist in removing staples.

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

If a competitor has failed the IG inspection as spelled out in the previous section, the Stat House copy of the failure form must accompany the competitor's target to the stat building for disqualification.

General Rules of Competition

When an individual target and/or backer blows from the frame during an individual match, 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. (Rule 12.7.a)

If an alibi is granted, the shooter must complete the number of unfired rounds in the next individual match relay of the same time duration. (Rule 12.7.b)

An alibi shall not be granted if the shooter cannot find his target that was blown off the frame. (Rule 12.7.c)

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

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

During the individual matches, all loading and firing must be done by the competitor. (Rule 18.3.1.a)

Assistance is permitted from behind the firing line as long as it does not interfere with other competitors. (Rule 18.3.1.b).

A competitor may have one coach, as long as the coaching does not interfere with other competitors. (Rule 18.4.1)

A competitor may have the help of a spotter, as long as the spotting does not interfere with other competitors. (Rule 18.5.1)

All revolvers shall be fired by holding the revolver in one hand only, supported by the strength of the arm, the other arm being used in no way to support the revolver or the shooting arm. (Rule 18.17.1.a)

All portions of the revolver shooter's clothing, body and firearm shall be clear of artificial supports. (Rule 18.17.1.b)

Competitors may stand with the forward foot on the firing line or may straddle it (stand with one foot forward and one foot completely behind), during company or individual match competition. (Rule 25.1.1.b)

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.

If questions arise that are not covered in this manual or by the National Safety Officer during training, please contact your Range Support Officer.

**Each national target label is color coded by firearm.
The correct color codes for this national are:**

Musket _____

Carbine _____

Revolver _____

Breechloading Rifle/Carbine II _____

Smoothbore _____

Single Shot Breechloader _____

Single Shot Pistol _____

NOTES: