**CHAPTER 29**

**Title: Firearms Safety Program**

**Issuance Date: 1/7/2022**

**Instruction:**This chapter is revised to add Department of the Interior (DOI) Charge Card policy related to ammunition procurement, update references, and relocate responsibilities elements to SM 445-2-H, Chapter 2, *Responsibilities,* and to Survey Manual (SM) 445.1, Occupational Safety and Health Policy and Responsibilities.

**Approving Official:** Holly Weyers, Acting Associate Director for Administration

1. **Purpose and Scope.**
2. This chapter specifies the minimum occupational safety and health requirements for the firearms safety program.
3. The requirements apply to U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) personnel, volunteers, and those who work under USGS funding/direction who, in the performance of their official duties, are required to use, handle, carry, transport or store government or personally owned firearms (any breech-loaded handgun or shoulder-fired small arm from which one or more projectiles are fired by gunpowder or compressed gas) for protection against dangerous wildlife or for specimen collection.
4. Flare guns are not covered under this chapter.
5. **References.**
6. 18 United States Code (U.S.C.) Crimes and Criminal Procedure, Chapter 44 Firearms.
7. 26 U.S.C. Internal Revenue Code, Chapter 53 Machine Guns, Destructive Devices, and Certain Other Firearms.
8. 27 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 447, 478, and 479.
9. State Firearm Laws and Regulations pertaining to firearms use, handling, transport, and storage.
10. National Fire Protection Association 495 Explosive Materials Code.
11. 14 CFR 108 Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation, Airplane Operator Security.
12. DOI-AAAP-0027, Department of Interior Integrated Charge Card Program Policy.
13. DOI-AAAP-0156, Department of Interior Purchase Charge Card Policy.
14. USGS Firearms Instructor Manuals.
15. Document Firearms Disposal Process available at USGS Office of Personal Property Management, internal).
16. Document Property Requiring Special Handling (available at USGS Office of Personal Property Management, internal).
17. Information on Firearms and Ammunition (internal).
18. SM 445-2-H, Chapter 55, Glossary of Terms and Acronyms and Chapter 2, Responsibilities.
19. **Requirements.**
20. Certificate of Need and Qualification Inquiry.
21. A Certificate of Need (Appendix 29-A, Certificate of Need for Issuance of a Firearm for Official Use) will be completed for all personnel authorized to use a firearm as part of their official duties.  The Certificate of Need will be issued for the time frame required (time frame of use) and, at no time, be issued to cover more than a 12-month period.  An approved study plan is required for issuance of a Certificate of Need for specimen collection.
22. Approval of the Certificate of Need will be by a direct supervisor who has knowledge of firearm needs and training in firearms safety.
23. Failure to return a firearm by the termination date on the Certificate of Need does not alleviate the responsibility of the user.  The user may be responsible for damage or theft of the firearm.  General accountability guidelines for firearms are that the item is:
24. Stored in a locked facility when not in use.
25. Removed from public view when leaving an unattended area.
26. Closely safeguarded when on travel status.
27. On September 30, 1996, 18 U.S.C. Chapter 44 §992(g)(9) took effect, making it a felony for anyone convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence to possess firearms or ammunition.  Personnel that use a firearm for official business will be required to fill out a Qualification Inquiry (Appendix B, USGS Firearms Qualification Inquiry form) self-certifying that they have not been convicted of such crimes prior to approval of the Certificate of Need or participation in firearms training.  A new Qualification Inquiry Form will be submitted with each new Certificate of Need or firearms training course request.
28. Firearms Training.
29. Personnel cannot be certified to use a firearm without first successfully completing a USGS approved Basic Firearms Certification Course (BFCC), which includes the 24-hour BFCC for Defense Against Dangerous Wildlife (Basic Defense Course) or the 8-hour BFCC for Specimen Collection (Basic Collection Course).  Personnel carrying a firearm for both self-defense and specimen collection must first complete the Basic Defense Course.  The Basic Defense Course can suffice for certification for collection purposes. All firearms safety training must be documented on a SF-182, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training Form.
30. To recertify for defense purposes, an 8-hour USGS-approved Refresher Firearms Certification Course (RFCC) for Defense Against Dangerous Wildlife (Refresher Defense Course) must be attended annually.  Recertification is valid for 12 months.
31. To recertify for collection purposes, a USGS-approved RFCC for Specimen Collection must be attended annually.
32. The Defense Against Dangerous Wildlife Course must be repeated if the employee:
33. Does not attend a Refresher Defense Course annually.
34. Does not successfully complete the Refresher Defense Course.
35. Has poor performance or unsafe behavior using firearms.
36. All training hours specified for USGS Basic and Refresher Firearms Certification courses are to be considered the minimal number of training hours required.
37. Alternative firearms certification courses and training schedules may be substituted upon approval of the USGS Firearms Safety Committee or established Regional Firearms Committees.  Contractors should work directly with the USGS Firearms Safety Committee or established Regional Firearms Committee to ensure that contracted training is relevant to survey objectives.  All USGS-approved firearms certification courses must cover the minimum firearms training standards specified in Appendix C, USGS Minimum Firearms Training Standards.
38. Personnel who use devices that resemble firearms and that fire blanks, hypodermic darts, cracker shells, etc., will complete firearms safety training listed in Appendix C, USGS Minimum Firearms Training Standards.  Training must include at a minimum:
39. General Firearms Safety and Four Rules of Firearms Safety;
40. Firearms Safety in the Field;
41. Bureau Firearms Regulations and Policies; and
42. Supervisor and Personnel Responsibilities.
43. Firearms Instructors.
44. Personnel who serve as USGS Firearms Instructors for the Basic Defense and Refresher Defense courses will be certified by the USGS Firearms Safety Program Manager.  USGS Firearms Instructors who teach these courses must successfully complete the following training:
45. 24-hour BFCC for Defense Against Dangerous Wildlife;
46. 8-hour RFCC for Defense Against Dangerous Wildlife.  Assisting in the instruction of the Refresher Defense Course can substitute in meeting this training requirement;
47. USGS Firearms Instructor Certification Course (FICC) for Defense Against Dangerous Wildlife.  The FICC for Defense Against Dangerous Wildlife is valid for 5 years;
48. To recertify as a USGS Firearms Instructor for Defense Against Dangerous Wildlife, an appropriate FICC must be successfully completed every 5 years as approved by the USGS Firearms Safety Program Manager. Successful completion of this course will be determined by the USGS Firearms Safety Program Manager, Regional Firearms Managers, and instructors leading the course.
49. Teaching segments of the FICC for Defense Against Dangerous Wildlife while under the purview of the USGS or Regional Firearms Manager can substitute for training.
50. Basic National Rifle Association Instructor Certification Program, to include Range Safety Officer;
51. An accredited, non-government firearms training course (40 hours minimum) approved by the USGS or Regional Firearms Safety Program Manager;
52. Continuing education training from an accredited, government or non-government firearms training course approved by the Bureau or Regional Firearms Manager must be successfully completed every 3 years.
53. Personnel who serve as USGS Firearms Instructors for the Basic Collection and Refresher Collection courses will be certified by the USGS Firearms Safety Program Manager.  Firearms Instructors for both these courses must successfully complete the following training elements:
54. 8-hour BFCC for Specimen Collection (Basic Collection Course);
55. USGS approved RFCC for Specimen Collection (Refresher Collection Course).  Assisting in the instruction of the Refresher-Collection Course can substitute in meeting this training requirement;
56. USGS FICC for Specimen Collection.
57. The FICC for Specimen Collection is valid for 5 years.
58. To recertify as a USGS Firearms Instructor for Specimen Collection, an appropriate FICC must be successfully completed every 5 years.
59. Assisting in the instruction of the FICC for Specimen Collection can substitute in meeting this training requirement.
60. In addition to the above training, all USGS Firearms Instructors must be able to demonstrate the ability to independently and effectively teach the fundamentals of firearms safety in accordance with the USGS Firearms Instructor Manuals.
61. Non-USGS government personnel or private contractors who serve as firearms instructors must meet certain standards. All contracted firearms safety training courses will be evaluated by the USGS Firearms Committee or an established Regional Firearms Committee to ensure adequate coverage of the course content listed in Appendix 29-C, USGS Minimum Firearms Training Standards and USGS Firearms Instructor Manuals.
62. Non-USGS government personnel or private contractors who serve as firearms instructors must have the following minimum training and certification requirements:
63. Firearms Instructor Certification from an established Firearms Training Program (e.g., National Rifle Association Instructor Certification).
64. Experience teaching firearms safety to include a curriculum containing lesson plans that stress the potential hazards associated with firearms use and establish appropriate safeguards to minimize the risks and liabilities to both students and instructors.
65. Assistant Firearms Instructors and instructor-candidates will be appointed by their respective Regional Firearms Safety Program Manager.
66. USGS personnel who serve as Assistant Firearms Instructors and instructor-candidates will have successfully completed appropriate USGS Basic and Refresher Firearms Safety courses.  In addition, they will have demonstrated proficiency in the safe use and handling of firearms, participated in ongoing shooting range activities, and shown an interest in the USGS Firearms Safety Program and firearms safety instruction.
67. USGS Firearms Safety Committee.
68. The USGS Firearms Safety Committee has been established and will operate in accordance with SM 308.66, Specialized Safety Committees.
69. Regional Firearms Committees.
70. Regional Firearms Safety Committees may be established at the discretion of the Regional Director to oversee firearms safety training in the region, assist managers in selecting appropriate contractors for firearms safety training, and evaluate contractor course curriculum.
71. The Regional Firearms Manager, appointed by the Regional Director, will oversee the respective regional firearms activities and chair the regional firearms safety committee, if established.
72. Regional firearms safety committee membership will be representative from organizations that use firearms.
73. **Recordkeeping.**
74. Firearms File Maintenance.  Local firearms safety staff will maintain files containing the following information:
75. Firearms safety training records for personnel who attend USGS Basic and Refresher Firearms Certification courses to ensure training is up to date.
76. Certificate of Need records.
77. Inventories of firearms maintained in their armory.
78. Firearms sign-out logs which must include location and employee names.
79. All records of firearms maintenance and repair.
80. Records of unintended firearms discharges in training and field work environments.
81. Records of lost, stolen, or functionally-damaged firearms.
82. Firearms Accidents or Incidents. For any firearm accident, incident (inclusive of discharges), or defensive action, the supervisor authorizing the Certificate of Need will complete a report in the Department of Interior Safety Management Information System (SMIS) as described in Survey Manual Chapter 7, Accident/Incident Reporting and Serious Accident Investigation.  In addition, a hard copy of the SMIS report will be forwarded through local management to the Firearms Safety Program Manager for review by the Firearms Safety Committee.
83. **Safe Storage and Security.**
84. Storage.  All firearms and ammunition will be stored in a secure area under lock and key when not being used in the field, in transit, or the firearm is not under the direct control of the employee in accordance with the Firearms and Ammunition section in the USGS Physical Security Handbook (internal)*.*  “Under lock and key” means that the firearm is to be stored in a locked hard case or stored in a soft gun case with a trigger safety lock employed.
85. Transportation.
86. General Transportation.
87. All firearms and ammunition will be transported in accordance with the Firearms and Ammunition section in the USGS Physical Security Handbook (internal).
88. Firearms will be unloaded during transportation.
89. Neither the firearms nor any ammunition being transported will be directly accessible from the passenger compartment of the transporting vehicle.  In the case of a vehicle without a compartment separate from the driver’s compartment, the firearm or ammunition will be contained in a locked container other than the glove compartment or console.
90. Any personnel authorized to use a firearm in the field must follow the State and municipal laws concerning the transportation and mode of carry of firearms in the transporting vehicle.  Note: State permits authorizing concealed carry are not recognized by the USGS and do not apply to government personnel as long as the employee is on official duty.
91. Aircraft Travel.
92. Firearms, ammunition, and firearm parts may be permitted in checked baggage if unloaded and properly locked following Transportation Security Administration (TSA) guidelines in a hard-sided container
93. Firearms, ammunition, and firearm parts transported on commercial airlines must be declared to the airline. Before checking any firearm to be carried in the baggage, employees must read and sign the Firearms Declaration Tag.
94. The employee must follow the Federal Aviation Administration and airlines requirements for traveling with a firearm(s) and ammunition. It is strongly encouraged that the traveler reviews all information online or by phone through TSA and the airlines before departing for the airport.
95. Even if an item is generally permitted on commercial flights, it may be subject to additional screening or not allowed through the checkpoint if it triggers an alarm during the screening process, appears to have been tampered with, or poses other security concerns.  The final decision rests with TSA on whether to allow any items on the plane.
96. For mission aircraft operations, firearms and ammunition must be declared to the pilot or authorized representative prior to boarding, and hazard materials training is required in accordance with the Interagency Aviation Training Guidebook.
97. Lost or Stolen Firearms.
98. Lost or stolen firearms will be reported within 24 hours, by the employee who checked out the firearm to their supervisor, Center Management, USGS Bureau or Regional Firearms Safety Program Manager, and the local law enforcement agency. The Bureau or Regional Firearms Safety Manager will work with the employee and supervisor to document and record the lost or stolen property in the appropriate databases. This includes USGS and personally owned firearms.
99. Any missing or lost ammunition will be reported within 24 hours to the USGS and (or) Regional Firearms Safety Program Manager.
100. Ammunition.
101. Damaged or hand-loaded ammunition will not be used.  Damaged or faulty ammunition will be disposed of as recommended by the Regional Firearms Safety Program Manager or local Firearms Safety Officer.
102. Small arms ammunition (e.g., rifle, pistol, or shotgun cartridges) will be separated from materials classified by the U. S. Department of Transportation as flammable liquids, flammable solids, and oxidizing materials by a distance of 15 feet or by a fire partition having a fire resistance of at least 1 hour.
103. Small arms ammunition will not be stored together with Division 1.1, Division 1.2, or Division 1.3 explosives unless the storage facility is suitable for storage of explosive materials.
104. Bureau and Regional Firearms Safety Program Managers have the delegated Designated Agency Safety and Health Official (DASHO) authority to procure ammunition and approve local ammunition purchases with a Government issued purchase credit card where supply contracts for ammunition do not have the caliber, grain, or other specifications to meet operational needs.
105. Requests and supporting documentation to purchase ammunition via charge card will be entered into the Acquisition Requirements Toolkit (ART) and include the caliber, quantity, vendor, and justification for not utilizing a purchase order, and the date, location and name of the instructor of the last Defense Against Wild Animals or Specimen Collection Course completed.
106. The Bureau or Regional Firearms Manager will approve the request in ART by adding the annotation “Ammunitions Purchase Approved via DASHO Delegation to the record.”
107. Upon approval, the individual making the charge card purchase would add the “Requirement Purchased via Government Charge Card” to the record, closing out the action in ART.  Credit card statements and packing slips/receipts will also be maintained by the respective individual making the ammunition purchase.

CHAPTER 29, APPENDIX A

**Certificate of Need for a Firearm of Official Use**

First name MI Last name

Name of requestor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Location of field work: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of use: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Start date Return date Date of request

Time frame of use: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Firearm(s) used: \_\_\_ Personal/USGS Serial Numbers Qualified to carry?

Type of Firearm: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Verification of training (yes/no) \_\_\_\_ Current training complete

\_\_\_\_ Current Domestic Violence Certificate on file

I certify that the following employee has a need for the use of a firearm in connection with official duties and has met the training requirements outlined in the USGS Occupational Hazards and Safety Procedures Handbook (445-2-H), Chapter 19.

Supervisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prior to Issuing Firearm \_\_\_\_ Signed copy of Certificate of Need on file

(yes/no) \_\_\_\_ Safety lock issued

\_\_\_\_ Advised to return within 30 days of “Time Frame of Use” and in good working order

Requestor Initials

Additional copies will be forwarded to and retained by the employee supervisor.

Memorandum

To: All Employees Issued Government-Owned Firearms or Ammunition

All Employees Authorized to Possess Firearms or Ammunition

From: DOI/USGS Management

Subject: Disqualification for Misdemeanor Convictions for Domestic Violence

There has been a recent change in the law pertaining to possession of firearms or ammunition. On September 30, 1996, 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(9) took effect, making it a felony for anyone who has been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence to possess a firearm or ammunition. A “misdemeanor crime of domestic violence” is defined generally as any offense—whether or not explicitly described in a statute as a crime of domestic violence⎯which has as its factual basis the use or attempted use of physical force, or the threatened use of a deadly weapon, committed by the victim's current or former domestic partner, parent, or guardian. The term “convicted” is generally defined in the statute as excluding convictions that have been expunged or has been set aside, or for which the individual has received a pardon. A copy of the statute is attached. Please review it.

This provision applies to persons who have been convicted at any time⎯even prior to the effective date of the law. There is no exemption for law enforcement officers or agents, or for any official government use. If you ever have been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence within the meaning of the statute, continued possession of any firearm or ammunition, whether Government-issued or privately-owned, is grounds for felony criminal penalties, including the sentence of imprisonment of up to ten years and a fine of up to $250,000. Such unlawful possession of firearms or ammunition also may be grounds for administrative disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

If you are affected by this statute:

(1) You may not possess ANY firearms or ammunition; and

(2) You must return any Government-issued firearm or ammunition to your immediate supervisor.

Since the statute makes it illegal for you to possess any firearm or ammunition, any previously issued authorization to possess a firearm or ammunition is revoked. A conviction “within the meaning of the statute” means those convictions that have not been expunged or set aside, or for which the individual has not received a pardon.

The withdrawal of authority to use or possess firearms and ammunition, based on a conviction for a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, is permanent, with one exception: a future pardon or expungement of the conviction under applicable state law will cancel the firearms ban, unless the pardon or expungement expressly maintains the ban. You may seek expungement or pardon only at your own expense and on your own time.

Unfortunately, another avenue of relief has been foreclosed by legislation. Under 18 U.S.C. § 925 (c), the Secretary of Treasury is authorized to grant relief to anyone prohibited from possessing firearms under 18 U.S.C. §922. Since 1922, however, the Treasury Department has been prohibited in annual appropriations acts from using appropriated funds to consider applications for relief for individuals. The Omnibus Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1997, Public Law 104-208, retains this prohibition.

Attached to this memorandum is a qualification inquiry (see Appendix 29-B in this Handbook), which you must complete and return to your immediate supervisor within ten (10) working days of receipt. If you have any questions, you may contact your immediate supervisor, your union representative, or a private attorney.

CHAPTER 29, APPENDIX B

**USGS Firearms Qualification Inquiry**

The information obtained from this inquiry will be used to determine whether under the new legislation, 18 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 922(g)(9), you are barred from possessing a firearm. Reassignment or other administrative action may be necessary on the information provided in this questionnaire.

YOU MUST COMPLETE THIS QUALIFICATION INQUIRY AND PROVIDE IT TO YOUR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR WITHIN TEN (10) WORKING DAYS OF RECEIPT. REFUSAL OR FAILURE TO RESPOND, OR SUBMITTING RESPONSES THAT ARE INCOMPLETE OR UNTRUE, MAY BE GROUNDS FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION, UP TO AND INCLUDING REMOVAL.

Neither your answers, nor any information or evidence obtained by reason of your answers, can be used against you in any criminal prosecution for violation of 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(9). However, the answers you furnish and any information or evidence resulting therein may be used against you in a prosecution for knowingly and willfully providing false statements or information, and may be a basis for agency disciplinary action.

18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(9) makes it a felony for anyone who has been convicted under federal or state law of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence to possess any firearm or ammunition. A “misdemeanor crime of domestic violence” is defined generally as any offense⎯whether or not explicitly described in a statute as a crime of domestic violence⎯which has as its factual basis the use or attempted use of physical force, or the threatened use of a deadly weapon, committed by the victim's current or former domestic partner, parent, or guardian. The law further provides that:

(B)(I) A person shall not be considered to have been convicted of such an offense for purposes of this chapter unless:

1. The person was represented by counsel in the case, or knowingly and intelligently waived the right to counsel in the case; and
2. In the case of a prosecution for an offense described in the paragraph for which a person was entitled to a jury trial in the jurisdiction in which the case was tried, either

(a) The case was tried by a jury, or

(b) The person knowingly or intelligently waived the right to have the case tried by a jury, by guilty plea, or otherwise.

(c) A person shall not be considered to have been convicted of such an offense for purposes of this chapter if the conviction has been expunged or set aside, or is an offense for which the person has been pardoned or has had civil rights restored, unless the pardon, expungement, or restoration of civil rights expressly provides that the person may not ship, transport, possess, or receive firearms.

Certification. To resolve any question whether you are affected by the statute, that is, whether you have been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence within the meaning of the statute, you should contact your immediate supervisor, your agency ethics officer, a union representative, or a private attorney.1

1.) Have you even been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence within the meaning of the statute?

Initial and date: Yes\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I am not certain\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2.) If you answered “yes” to the first question, please provide the following information with respect to the conviction:

Court/Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Docket/Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Statute/Charge: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date Sentenced: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3.) If you answered “yes” to the first question, was that conviction expunged or set aside or have you been pardoned for the offense or otherwise had your civil rights restored without a continuing prohibition of the use or possession of firearms or ammunition?

Initial and date: Yes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If you answer “yes” to this question, please provide documentation of the expungement, set aside, or pardon.

IF YOU ANSWERED "YES" OR "I AM NOT CERTAIN" TO THE FIRST QUESTION, UNTIL YOU PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION OF ANY EXPUNGEMENT, SET ASIDE, OR PARDON, YOU MUST IMMEDIATELY TURN OVER ANY GOVERNMENT-ISSUED FIREARMS OR AMMUNTION TO YOUR SUPERVISOR. ADDITIONALLY, YOUR AUTHORIZATION TO CARRY A GOVERNMENT-OWNED OR PERSONALLY-OWNED FIREARM AND AMMUNITION IS RESCINDED.

1A conviction “within the meaning of the statute” means those convictions that have not been expunged or set aside, or for which the individual had not received a pardon.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the information provided by me is true, correct, and complete. I understand that false or fraudulent information provided herein may be grounds for adverse personnel actions, up to and including removal, and is criminally punishable pursuant to Federal law, including 18 U.S.C. § 1001.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

CHAPTER 29, APPENDIX C

**USGS Minimum Firearms Training Standards**

**Introduction**

These minimum standards are general guidelines for anyone instructing U.S. Geological Survey (USGS or Bureau) employees, volunteers, and those working under USGS funding/direction, in the safe handling and employment of firearms for defense against wild animals and during specimen collection.

All firearms training conducted under the auspices of the USGS will meet or exceed these minimum standards and those stated in Chapter 33 of the USGS Occupational Safety and Health Program Requirements Handbook, 445-2-H. Anyone trained under the USGS firearms safety program will realize that firearms safety is an individual responsibility. The most reliable form of firearms safety is the correct mental attitude of the firearm user. Anyone trained in firearms safety is not only responsible for their own safety but is also responsible for the safety of fellow field partners and team members.

All questions concerning USGS Firearms Policy and Regulations will be addressed to the USGS Firearms Safety Committee. This committee has authority over the USGS firearms safety program and is comprised of the Bureau Firearms Manager, representatives from each regional office, and the Occupational Safety and Health Management Branch. Below is an outline of the various topics that will be covered in any USGS Firearms Safety Certification Course. Most of the training standards apply to both the Defense Against Wild Animals and Specimen Collection Training Programs; however, standards that are restricted to one program are noted in parentheses.

**Minimum Training Standards**

1. *General Firearms Safety*.

1. Compulsive behavior in firearms safety and safe gun handling will always be stressed and encouraged.
2. Firearms safety needs to stress being in control of the firearm at all times.
3. Firearms safety training will be taught to be reflexive (i.e., automatically reacting safely with a firearm without deliberate thought). Teaching reflexive safe gun handling is particularly important for employees who carry firearms under potentially stressful field conditions.
4. Instructors will demonstrate the principles of firearms safety and safe gun handling at every opportunity.

2. *Four Rules of Firearms Safety*.

Rule 1 – Treat all firearms as if they are always loaded. There are no exceptions to this rule. Assume that all firearms are loaded until you have verified otherwise.

Rule 2 – Never allow a firearm to point at anything you are not willing to destroy. Experience has shown that this is the easiest rule to violate.

More than half of the fatal firearms accidents are a result of neglecting safety rules 1 and 2.

Rule 3 – Keep your finger off the trigger and out of the trigger guard until your sights are on target. This rule is absent in many firearms safety training programs and is particularly important to staying safe while carrying a firearm under stress, while moving, etc.

Rule 4 – Be sure of your target and what lies beyond. This rule is about target identification. Identify the target and what is in front, beside, and in back of their target before firing.

These rules should be repeated a number of times throughout the lectures and during range exercise. Students should be taught that they are ultimately responsible for whatever happens when using a firearm, and that it is imperative that they fully understand the “four rules of firearms safety” and make them a part of reflexive behavior.

3. *Proper Use of Mechanical Safeties*.

1. The mechanical safety is a manufacturer engineered safety device. It provides an extra level of safety if the user breaks one or more of the safety rules.
2. Mechanical safeties will remain engaged until the decision to fire has been made.
3. Use of the mechanical safety is one of the key elements in the field ready condition, and its use provides consistency of training and increases familiarity with the firearm.

4. *Firearms Safety in the Field*.

Employees should fully familiarize themselves with their firearm before going into the field. Much of the discussion concerning firearms safety in the field is common sense, but fatigue associated with field work can diminish common sense. Guns along with alcohol or drug (including certain prescription drugs) use are bad combinations that can lead to serious injury or death.

1. Field and camp policies.
2. Transport of firearms and ammunition on commercial airlines.
3. Field aircraft (helicopter and fixed wing).
4. Watercraft.
5. Government vehicles.
6. Personal carry.
7. Hazards of terrain.
8. Extreme cold.

All employees will follow State and local laws concerning the personal carrying of firearms. State-issued concealed carry permits are not recognized by the USGS and do not apply as long as the employee, volunteer, etc., is on official duty.

5. *USGS Regulations and Policies*.

1. Employees required to carry a firearm, as a part of their official duties, will have their supervisor to complete and sign a Certificate of Need.
2. It is the direct responsibility of the supervisor to approve the Certificate of Need and have direct knowledge of the employee’s current training in firearms safety.
3. Employees, volunteers, and those who work under USGS funding/direction who use a firearm on official business will fill out a Qualification Inquiry self-certifying that they have not been convicted of domestic violence crimes prior to approval of the Certificate of Need or participation in firearms safety training. 18 U.S.C. 992(g)(9) makes it a felony for anyone convicted of a Misdemeanor Crime of Domestic Violence to possess firearms or ammunition. A new Qualification Inquiry will be submitted for each new Certificate of Need or firearms training course request.
4. Employees will ensure that all firearms used for official business are stored, handled, carried, and used to eliminate the possibility of an unintended discharge of the firearm. All firearms and ammunition will be stored in a secure area under lock and key. Additional requirements for storage and security of firearms/ammunition are found in the USGS Physical Security Handbook(internal).
5. Firearms used by USGS employees will be under lock and key when not in use according to the June 16, 1997, Department of Interior Memorandum entitled “Child Safety Locking Devices for Handguns.” The firearm will also be locked during transit or when not under the direct control of the cognizant person.

6. *Responsibilities Associated with Firearms Training, Issuance, and Use.*

1. Employee responsibilities.
2. Supervisor responsibilities.
3. The armed employee: how to act in the field.
4. Importance of working within scope of employment and the Federal Employee Liability Reform and Tort Compensation Act of 1988.

7. *Firearm Types, Parts, and their Function*. Proper operation of the firearm type used in field operations will be taught and understood.

8. *Effective Ammunition Types and Performance*. Various types of ammunition, bullet construction, and their terminal ballistics for required field applications will be discussed.

9. *Safe Firearms Manipulation*.

1. Proper stance and presentation.
2. Safe loading, unloading, and reloading the firearm. Teaching how and when to reload a firearm under stressful field situations is an important element in safe firearms manipulation.
3. Elements of marksmanship.
4. Center of mass concept (defense against wild animals only).
5. Field-carry condition: chamber empty, magazine full, safety on. The mechanical safety will be employed when the firearm is in the field-ready condition.
6. Safe use of slings.

10. *The Defensive Mindset/Mental Conditioning for Defense Against Wild Animals (Defense Against Wild Animals Only)*. Personal, moral, and ethical decisions concerning the use of lethal force on potentially dangerous wild animals will be discussed.

11. *Collector Ethics* (Specimen Collection Only).

12. *Animal Habitat and Behavior and Methods of Avoidance* (Defense Against Wild Animals Only). The odds of avoiding a hostile encounter with wild animals will increase the more the students know about the wild animals they could encounter in their field area. Always attempt to employ passive tactics before elevating to potential lethal force.

1. General wild animal characteristics.
2. Animal signs.
3. Animal range and habitats.
4. Animal behavior (aggressive and nonaggressive).
5. Potential confrontations and proper responses.
6. Methods of avoidance.
7. Camp etiquette.

The needless killing of wild animals can only be avoided through a combination of firearms safety training, proper defensive mindset, and animal awareness and habitat/behavior training.

13. *Nonlethal Deterrents (Defense Against Wild Animals Only)*.

1. Proper use of nonlethal deterrent.
2. Description of the various nonlethal deterrents.
3. Ranges, effectiveness, and limitations of common deterrents.
4. Safety and liability issues associated with nonlethal deterrents.

14. *Firearms Maintenance*. Proper methods of cleaning and maintaining firearms and ammunition will be discussed.

15. *Range Exercises*

1. Appropriate range and field exercises to begin the development of firearms proficiency and to test skills in the application of the four rules of firearms safety.
2. Range exercises will stress the application of the four rules of firearms safety and the process of verifying and reverifying the condition of the firearm.
3. All range exercises will test the elements of marksmanship.
4. When on the firing line, always use range commands that are simple, explicit, and consistent from instructor to instructor.
5. Always follow a range progression that introduces and teaches no more than one new firearms handling technique at a time.
6. Both written exams and range qualifications will be given to test the student’s application of the four rules of firearms safety and safe gun handling principles.
7. Range qualifications will be scored. The student must score 70 percent or higher with each firearm that they are authorized to carry and use. A score below 70 percent will be considered unsatisfactory for the purpose of firearms qualification, and the employee may not perform duties which require the carry and use of a firearm.