

INDUSTRY WIDE LABOR-MANAGEMENT SAFETY COMMITTEE

SAFETY BULLETIN #1

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE USE OF FIREARMS, BLANKS, AND DUMMY ROUNDS

Live ammunition (“ammunition”) is never to be used on set nor brought onto any work location, including any studio lot, stage, or location unless it meets the specific exceptions as described in *Safety Bulletin #2 - Prohibitions And Special Restrictions On The Use Of Live Ammunition*. Refer to Safety Bulletin #2 for guidance on the handling of ammunition.

Please see the Glossary at the end of this document that defines certain key terms.

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These guidelines are intended to give recommendations on the safe handling, use, and storage of firearms. Firearms include shotguns, pistols, machine guns, rifles, and muzzle-loaders.

These guidelines also cover firearms loaded with blank rounds (“blanks”) and dummy inert rounds (“dummy rounds”). Dummy rounds do not have a firing component but often are used by performers to simulate the loading of a firearm. It is strongly recommended that dummy rounds have an audible “BB” and that the primer itself is a dummy inert primer.

All use, handling, storage, and transportation of firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds shall be in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

The Property Master, Assistant Property Master, or the Armorer (collectively, the “Property Master”) will be the individuals acting in the interest of the Production for obtaining, maintaining, and handling all firearms. Firearms in the film industry are considered props and are the responsibility of the Property Master. The Property Master will work in conjunction with the Production to ensure adherence to these guidelines.

The Production, in consultation with the Property Master, should consider the use of rubber guns, non-guns, non-functioning replicas, and replicas with recoil simulators. Though these devices are not firearms, standard firearms safety practices should still be observed while using these devices.

This Safety Bulletin should be distributed with the call sheet each day that firearms will be used.

Production Responsibilities

1. Check what specific licenses or permits are required by the Authority Having Jurisdiction (“AHJ”) at the local, state, federal, and/or international level.
2. The Studio Safety and Security Departments may need to be notified prior to a production’s use of firearms on studio property. Local law enforcement, or an applicable AHJ, may also need to be notified prior to any firearm use.
3. Ensure the Property Master’s qualifications are adequate for working with the type of firearm(s) being used. Their qualifications include their knowledge of the handling, use, safekeeping, and familiarity with the type of blanks to be utilized.
4. If the Property Master is not familiar with the firearm(s) to be used, they should consult an expert who is familiar with the firearm(s).
5. Ensure that the Property Master knows who the appropriate Production representative is to communicate any safety-related concerns.
6. Allow the Property Master to safely perform all assigned duties and responsibilities. In order to accomplish this, the Property Master should be adequately staffed, taking into consideration, in part, the number of firearms required for a particular scene or sequence.
7. Ensure that a sufficient amount of time has been allotted for training, safety meetings, and rehearsal.
8. Establish safety protocols for all firearm-related production events, including those that may occur with less frequency, such as reenactments (e.g., historical battle sequences with reenactment groups), documentaries, and custom firing sequences.

Property Master Responsibilities

The Property Master is responsible for:

1. Being present whenever a firearm is being used or handled.
2. Knowing the standards, rules, and regulations for the firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds used in the production, and about the practices for the safe handling, use, and storage of the firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds that are used in the entertainment industry.
3. Ensuring that all firearms are either in the possession of the Property Master or are returned to the Property Master after being handled by other cast and crew.

4. Ensuring the custody and control of all firearms at all times.
5. Designating and supervising additional qualified persons working under the Property Master to assist as necessary.
6. Confirming that the correct firearms permits have been obtained for the possession and use of production firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds.
7. Securely storing firearms separately from blanks in accordance with federal, state, and local laws.
8. Knowing and adhering to manufacturer's warnings, expiration dates, storage instructions, and handling procedures for firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds.
9. Loading firearms with blanks or dummy rounds immediately before they are used in a scene.
10. Allowing cast and crew who are required to stand near the firing sequence to witness the loading of the firearm.
11. Using the appropriate load of blanks and blank-fire adapter, if applicable, required for the scene.

Training

The Property Master shall be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations for the firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds used in the production, and about the practices for the safe handling, use, and storage of the firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds that are used in the entertainment industry. This knowledge could come from many sources (i.e., industry-specific training or experience).

No one shall be issued a firearm unless they have been trained in the safe handling, use, proper firing procedures, and proper use of all mechanical safety devices for each type of firearm. If there is any uncertainty as to the qualifications of the person who will use the firearm, the Production, in consultation with the Property Master, shall determine if additional training is required and shall ensure adequate time is provided for such training.

All cast and crew who are in proximity to working firearms should be trained about safe zones and about the proper conduct of personnel who will be present near firearms. This training can be accomplished through the safety meeting or by other means as determined by Production Management.

Safety Meeting

Before any firearm is used in a rehearsal, an on-camera sequence, or off-camera, the Production will conduct a safety meeting with all involved personnel to acquaint cast and crew members with relevant safety issues. This safety meeting shall include an “on-site walk-through” and/or “dry run” with the Property Master, designated Production representative, and anyone who will be using and/or handling a firearm.

If at any time a significant change becomes necessary, the First Assistant Director will conduct an additional meeting so that everyone understands the proposed change(s). The Property Master is to attend all safety meetings and rehearsals.

In the safety meeting, the following items should be discussed:

1. It is important that everyone treat all firearms, whether they are real, rubber, or replica firearms as if they are working, loaded firearms.
2. The types of firearms that will be used, their safety features, and what to expect when they are used.
3. The type of blanks and dummy rounds that will be used and how these blanks and dummy rounds can be distinguished from each other.
4. The firearms sequence, including intended action, possible deviations, plans to abort, emergency procedures, and the chain of command.
5. Aiming points and muzzle positions relative to the cast and crew who may be in close proximity to the line of fire.
6. Additional safety measures that have been implemented (e.g., Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”), camera lens protection, and lock-offs).
7. The firearms custody and control process.
8. Introduce the medic and other appropriate emergency personnel.
9. Instruct all cast and crew who are not required for the firearms sequence to clear the area after the safety meeting has concluded and to not return until an “all clear” signal has been given.
10. The establishment and use of effective communication channels and methods (e.g., voice commands, walkie-talkie communication, and hand signals).
11. Answer any cast or crew questions concerning the firearms sequence.

Rehearsal

A rehearsal is to be conducted before the use of a firearm so that the performer knows the intended range of action and appropriate minimum safe distance. The minimum safe distance is to be determined by the Property Master. This rehearsal also will establish the proper filming angles and safe areas for the cast and crew.

Safety Protocols

1. No person is to be coaxed, coerced, or otherwise forced into handling a firearm.
2. Nonessential personnel will be excluded from the set when firearms are used to enhance the safety of the cast and crew.
3. Protective shields, eye and hearing protection, and other applicable PPE will be made available and should be utilized by all personnel involved in the firearm sequence.
4. The cast and crew, including the Sound Department, will be notified of the types and loads of blanks that will be used.
5. All personnel should remain at a pre-determined safe distance whenever a firearm is loaded, handled, or fired.
6. The Property Master should inspect the firearm and barrel before every firing sequence.
7. Only a qualified person (either licensed or experienced) should load the firearm with blanks. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for the handling, storage, and disposal of blanks.
8. Only the required number of blanks for the take should be loaded into the firearm.
9. Whenever the Property Master gives a firearm to a performer, the Property Master shall advise the performer of the type of blank or dummy round being used and afford the performer, cast, and crew the supervised opportunity to verify the same.
10. Utilize all safety devices until the firearm is ready to be used.
11. Anyone handling the firearm will refrain from pointing a firearm at any person, including themselves. If it is necessary to aim a firearm at another person on camera, the Property Master will be consulted to determine available options. Remember: a firearm, including one loaded with blanks, can inflict severe damage to anything/anyone at which/to whom the firearm is pointed.

12. The performer is to never place their finger on the trigger until the performer is ready to fire.
13. There should be no horseplay with any firearm (including rubber, replica, and prop).
14. The firearm is not to be discharged when the barrel is obstructed by anything other than a blank-fire adapter that a qualified individual has properly installed.

After Each Firearm Sequence

1. No one should be allowed to step onto the set until the Property Master clears all firearms and announces to the cast and crew that the firearms are clear, and it is now safe to move around the set. This typically occurs by announcing "all clear."
2. Never leave a firearm (including a replica, rubber, or prop) unattended.
3. Blank-firing firearms will be immediately unloaded after the scene by a qualified person.
4. All malfunctions must be reported immediately to the Property Master. Malfunctioning or jammed firearms should be corrected by a qualified person or taken out of service until the problem is corrected.
5. The Property Master should inspect the firearm and barrel after every firing sequence.

Upon Completion of The Use of Firearms

1. All firearms must be returned to the Property Master, who shall ensure that they are cleaned, checked, and inventoried at the end of each day. Production must allow time in its filming schedule for this procedure.
2. There should be a sweep of the area for spent casings at the end of each day. The spent casings should be disposed of properly.
3. Ensure the safe storage of firearms, props (e.g., rubber guns, non-guns, non-functioning replicas, and replicas with recoil simulators), blanks, and dummy rounds. If these items are kept on location overnight, they must be secured.

Glossary

AMMUNITION a.k.a. LIVE AMMUNITION: One or more loaded cartridges or shotgun shells consisting of a primer cap, a shell case, a quantity of gunpowder, and a projectile.

For the purpose of this Safety Bulletin, ammunition does not include:

- a) blank rounds and dummy rounds;
- b) projectiles (regardless of the material or manufacturer) that are intended solely to create bullet-hit type special effects, such as projectiles fired from Air Rifles, Air Pistols, Air and/or Gas-operated Capsule Guns, Paintball Guns, Blow Guns, Squib-fired Trunnion Guns, Crossbows or Crossbow-type devices, Slingshots, or any other special-effects device designed to propel a projectile and create a bullet-hit type special effect; and
- c) any propelled projectile required to be photographed in flight. See Safety Bulletin No. 30, *Recommended Guidelines for Safely Working with Edged, Piercing, and Projectile Props*.

All such non-ammunition projectiles are to be supervised and operated under the direction of the licensed Special Effects Technician in charge.

ARMORER: This is the professional, skilled, and properly licensed technician who is hired by the Production, works under the direction and supervision of the Property Master, and maintains control of the firearms on set.

BLANK-FIRE ADAPTER a.k.a. PLUG: A device installed into the barrel of the firearm by a qualified individual to facilitate functionality with blanks.

BLANK ROUND a.k.a. BLANK: A cartridge consisting of a primer cap, a shell case, and a quantity of gunpowder, but that does not have a projectile. Blank rounds are produced by a licensed manufacturer using specialized, automated, or manual loading equipment.

CUSTODY AND CONTROL: This is the process to establish dominion and control of the firearm. It specifies who removes the firearm from a secure lockup, who checks in with the First Assistant Director or their designee, who gives the firearm to the performer, and who places the firearm back into a secure lock-up. Once a chain of custody is established, any deviation from this should be addressed at a Safety Meeting.

DUMMY INERT ROUNDS a.k.a. DUMMY ROUNDS: Inert cartridges consisting of a simulated primer (usually a machined, solid metal disk), a cartridge case, and a projectile. Ideally, dummy rounds will include a “BB” inside to give an audible indication that it is inert.

MUZZLE LOADER: A firearm loaded through the barrel's front opening.

NON-GUN: A firearm replica designed to accept and discharge small explosive charges by an electric impulse to create a simulated muzzle flash and noise. Non-guns are to be treated with the same safety precautions as an actual firearm.

PROPERTY MASTER: This is the member of the cast and crew responsible for acquiring appropriate props, organizing them, and overseeing the usage of props on set. Firearms are considered props in the film industry and are the responsibility of the Property Master or someone designated by the Property Master (i.e., the Armorer). The Property Master must maintain all necessary, firearms/ammunition/blanks-related licenses, permits, and documentation for the jurisdiction in which work is being performed.