

RANGE SAFETY OFFICER'S MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Watch the Gun - From the moment you give the "load and make ready" command, don't take your eyes off the gun...do this until the gun is cleared and reholstered. You may be able to pick up compliance with rules and procedures with your peripheral vision, and you have the scorekeeper to bring any violations to your attention as well. Be more aware when infractions are most likely to happen, such as finger on the trigger when moving or during a reload. You will assess any penalties after conferring with the scorekeeper immediately after making the range safe. If you and your scorekeeper miss something, oh well, it's only a game. Your focus must stay on the gun...nothing should distract you from that during the short period of time that the gun is out of the holster.

Peanut Gallery - Don't let anyone make calls for you and your scorekeeper. Bystanders love to do this...they think you missed something and want to help you make the call!!! Obviously we don't care what they saw; you make the call and your word is final. If anyone belligerently (hostile, aggressive, inclined or eager to fight) refuses to acknowledge your authority, please call Dave or JD over so we can escort them from the building.

Hostile Shooter - Every shooter is entitled to question your call...once. And they are entitled to receive an answer from you...once. Send them to Dave or JD if they want a second opinion. If the shooter gets belligerent hostile, aggressive, inclined or eager to fight call Dave or JD over so we can DQ them together.

Holstering a Pistol - Likely the most dangerous part of handling a pistol since it's possible to do so with a finger on the trigger; and it's pointed at their leg / foot. Be acutely aware of shooters who do things quickly or anticipate your commands, and let the other SO's know about that. Instruct a shooter you are concerned about to holster slowly so you can see where their trigger finger is when holstering...do this before the "load and make ready" command.

New Shooters - Some new shooters get so excited that strange things happen. Things like drawing when the "standby" command is given, or inserting a magazine and not chambering a round, or they are shaking so badly that they might drop the pistol. If that happens, have them reholster, calm them, speak slowly, have a little chat; tell them to go very slowly. If nothing helps, call Dave or JD over so we can evaluate the shooter and take the proper action. Help an unsure shooter all throughout the stage; tell them what to do next, identify misses or forgotten targets, etc. Quietly review their performance with them after holstering and before making the range safe. Nothing is as reassuring as kindly advice from you. PE's must be given, but be reasonable.

Angry Shooters - usually at themselves for making mistakes and / or shooting poorly. They might be so angry that they do things quickly, like unloading and holstering without waiting for range commands. Take control of that situation immediately. Instruct them to re-draw and go through the concluding range commands again (do this with anyone who anticipates your commands). Other shooters show anger by shooting wildly or by dumping rounds. Give them a stern warning. If they seem unrepentant after that, let Dave or JD know so we can reinforce your stern warning with "that only happens once if you like shooting here" advice.

Miscellaneous Items:

Shooting order...as SO in charge of the match, always be first to shoot the CoF; it identifies and allows you to correct any unforeseen problems (the ones you didn't find when you reviewed the CoF with the MD). Next in the order, place your most experienced shooters; and finally the newbies...so they can watch and learn.

Turn, face down range, draw and shoot...always instruct the shooter to turn to the gun side and to look in that direction so you will have a reasonable expectation that the shooter will turn away from you (you will stand on their weak side before the turn). Extend your arm with finger pointed in the direction that you want them to turn. In the walk-through, remind everyone to draw only when facing directly down range.

Looking away from the shooter to check on compliance to your "going hot, eyes and ears" command...don't do it!!! Do not take your eyes off the shooter after you start the command sequence. I've had shooters draw their gun when I asked if they understand the COF (which we don't do anymore).

If a shooter executes a command before you give it, always, always, always make them back up and respond to your commands as they are given.

Muzzle safe points...some will point the gun all over the place while moving, reloading, etc. even though we cover it obsessively in the safety course. Range safe points indoors are the outline of the gray backers. PE applies.

General condition of the shooter...upon arrival at the line: are they "loaded" (magazine in gun...if yes, check for chambered round), wearing holster and ammo carriers properly, hearing and eye protection in place, wearing ball cap, and concealment clothing if required?

Compliance with stage procedures...give penalties, it's completely acceptable, required, and the only way to learn for some. But remember to always be fair and to give the benefit of doubt to the shooter. Anytime you yell "cover, finger, muzzle" in accordance with the rulebook, we need to see a PE finger.

Cover...it's the hardest concept to learn and the easiest to get dinged for at a match. Some big matches pride themselves on conducting a tight match and this is one of the favorites to call. Watch for bad cover and call it.

Clearing the pistol...let the round drop to the floor. The temptation to catch it is great, but don't do it.

Unload and show clear...upon your command, the shooter must remove the magazine, check for empty chamber, and show it to you for the same purpose. If you can't clearly see both of those, ask the shooter to present the gun so you can. In response to this command, we have had many new shooters (and various others) rack the slide without first having removed the magazine...don't let that happen. We know of two occasions, at other ranges, where the "hammer down" command resulted in a shot fired; both were attributable to carelessness and preventable by sticking to procedure.

Props can conceal...someone who is still downrange. Before starting the command sequence, be absolutely certain downrange is clear.

Don't get run over...know where the shooter is supposed to go, and be prepared for them to go just about anywhere. It is your responsibility to keep from interfering with the shooter or endangering yourself.

Repeated finger on the trigger and muzzle violations...first time, warning and PE; second time, stern warning and PE; third time, stage DQ; fourth time, match DQ. Assuming no one was endangered. Record those instances with a special notation on the score sheet. Remember to give the shooter the benefit of any doubt, and advise the shooter of the next action if it happens again.

Magazine safeties...the shooter must show you an empty magazine, and you must give them permission to use it, before you allow them to proceed with the "hammer down" command.

"Unload, show clear" command...make the shooter pocket the mag they just removed from the gun before drawing the slide back, and don't let them pickup anything from the floor until the gun is holstered. Do not let anyone rack the slide with their hand over the ejection port. The slingshot hold on the slide must be used so you can clearly see the chamber. Direct anyone who disagrees to me so I can reinforce certain safety rules and show them the pictures of brass embedded in a severely black and blue hand...and tell them about the person who is missing the heel of their over-hand racking...hand...due to...over-hand racking!!!

Rules...be aware of the rules; read and know the rulebook.

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