

Handling of Theatrical Firearms *Making Sets Foolproof*

IATSE Recommendations

IATSE Recommendations for Safe Handling and Use of Theatrical Firearms

1. Blanks can kill. Treat all firearms as though they are loaded. This includes real as well as prop guns.
2. Never point a firearm at anyone, including yourself, and if called upon to do so, consult the Property Master or other safety representative such as the First A.D. or Stage Manager. Consider that whatever you point the gun at may be destroyed.
3. Never place your finger on the trigger until you're ready to shoot. Keep your finger alongside of - and off - the trigger.
4. Know where and what your intended target is. If you or another person involved are moving, do not fire towards the other person.
5. Do NOT engage in horseplay with any firearms or weapons.
6. NEVER discharge a firearm when the barrel has become clogged with dirt or foreign material. The Property Master should inspect the barrel of the weapon before every firing.
7. Maintain all safety devices in place until firearms are ready to be used.
8. Never lay down a firearm or leave it unattended. Unless actively filming or rehearsing, all firearms should be secured.
9. Make certain hand-loading or altering factory-loaded blank ammunition is done only by a person qualified (either by license or experience) to work on firearms. Check with state regulations to see if a license is required. In California, any custom-loading of blank cartridges must be performed by a licensed special effects pyrotechnic operator.
10. Do not use or bring live ammunition onto any studio lot, stage or location. (See section on live ammunition.)
11. Never coax, coerce or otherwise force anyone into handling a firearm.
12. Call firearm jams or malfunctions to the attention of the Property Master. Do not attempt to adjust, modify or repair a firearm or attempt to unjam the firearm. Malfunctioning firearms should be taken out of service until properly repaired by a person qualified to work on firearms.

- Utilize camera personnel shields, hearing protection or other appropriate personal protective equipment whenever camera personnel are to be near a point-blank shot.
- Utilize protective shields, hearing protection or other appropriate personal protective equipment for personnel who must be within close proximity of any blanks fired from a weapon.
- Notify the Studio Safety Department prior to any weapon use on Studio property.
- Follow all State and Federal safety regulations and be aware that they override these guidelines if they are more stringent.
- Being knowledgeable of and adhering to all manufacturer's warnings, expiration dates, storage and handling procedures for all blank ammunition.
- Issuing firearms. The Property Master will not issue a firearm until he or she has trained the person who is to use it. The training shall include handling and safe use, including the safety lock.
- Allotting a sufficient amount of time for training and rehearsal.
- Requiring that an actor or weapon-handler demonstrate prior knowledge, if any, of the safe handling of a firearm.
- Personally loading, or designating an experienced person working under his or her immediate supervision, to load the firearms. Firearms are to be loaded just before they are to be used in a scene.

Responsibilities of the Property Master

- Possession, control and distribution of all firearms on the set. All firearms to be used on the production, whether company owned or rented, or privately owned, are to be given to the Property Master.
- Designating individuals under his immediate supervision to assist him if necessary.
- Being qualified to work with the type of firearms being used, and being knowledgeable in their safe handling, use and safekeeping.
- Seeking expert advice if he or she is not familiar with the firearm to be used.
- Ensuring that current licenses and permits have been obtained for the possession and use of production firearms.
- Being knowledgeable about the laws governing transportation, storage and use of firearms and complying with those laws.
- Allowing any actor who is to stand near the line of fire to witness the loading of the firearm.
- Using the lightest load of blank ammunition consistent with the needs of the scene, and advising the director and other involved personnel.
- Notifying all present, including the sound mixer, prior to firing.
- Retaining possession of all firearms except during actual filming or rehearsal. Afterward, the Property Master will immediately unload the firearm.
- Checking each firearm before each use. All firearms must be cleaned, checked and double-checked, and inventoried at the close of each day's shooting. All weapons must be accounted for before personnel are allowed to leave the area. The production company needs to allow time in its shooting schedule for this procedure.

17. Using simulated or dummy prop guns whenever possible.
18. Ensuring that firearms carried by off-duty police officers working as extras are unloaded.

Live Ammunition

Live ammunition is not to be used on a set. Exception: On special effects second units there may be rare occasions when live ammunition must be used to obtain an effect.

Live ammunition may be used only if the following criteria have been met:

1. The Director, the Line Producer (if present), the Director of Photography, the Property Master, and the Licensed Special Effects Technician shall jointly determine whether a situation exists in which there is no practical alternative to the use of live ammunition to achieve an effect.
2. Live ammunition shall not be used under circumstances where a desired special effect can be achieved by using conventional special effects techniques by a qualified and licensed Special Effects Technician.
3. Notification will be made on the Call Sheet, or by other advance notice if there is no Call Sheet, before the date live ammunition is to be used.
4. Cast and crew members shall be limited to those members absolutely required to film the effect. No minor may be present in any scene or in the vicinity when live ammunition is being fired.
5. A Special Effects Technician with those licenses required by the Authority Having Jurisdiction will procure and maintain the proper firearm to achieve the special effect and determine that the firearm is in good, safe working condition. The

firearm will be kept in the control only of the Special Effects Technician. It will not be used as a prop.

6. In the event that the firearm to be used to fire live ammunition is to be provided by or matched by the Property Master, the Property Master shall be notified before the day the firearm is to be used. Where a weapon to be used to fire live ammunition is to be matched by a similar weapon for photographic purposes, the Special Effects Technician shall identify the live ammunition weapon by color or some other easily recognizable means of identification.
7. All live ammunition will be kept in the control of the licensed Special Effects Technician and shall be stored in a manner to keep it safe and secure. Live ammunition will be transported to and from the set on the day of its use. Live ammunition will not be kept on the set for any longer than is necessary to complete the scene in which it is being used. Live ammunition shall be secured in a locked box and clearly marked in a manner to differentiate it from blank ammunition.
8. A rehearsal shall be held to ensure that all who will be present know their assigned location.
9. Particular attention shall be paid to the line of fire, any possible ricochet hazard and/or spent bullet trajectory hazard.
10. An announcement shall also be made immediately before the live ammunition is fired.
11. The Special Effects technician is responsible for compliance with all local, state, and federal regulation related to the storage and use of live ammunition.

NOTE: The Term "Live Ammunition", as used herein, does not include those projectiles (regardless of the material or manufacture), which are intended solely for the purpose of creating bullet-hit type special effects, such as projectiles fired from air rifles, air pistols, air-operated capsule guns, paintball guns, blow guns, squib-fired trunion guns, crossbows or crossbow-type devices, slingshots or any other type of special effects device designed to propel any projectile intended to create a bullet hit or recoil type special effect. Additionally any propelled projectile, required to be photographed in flight, shall likewise not be considered "live ammunition." All such projectiles described are to be supervised and operated under the direction of the licensed Special Effects Technician in charge.

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