## RIFLE SAFETY AND THE CIVILIAN MARKSMANSHIP PROGRAM

Target shooting established its record as one of the safest of all sports because everyone in it must learn and follow basic safety rules.  Youth marksmanship activities have compiled an outstanding safety record where gun-related accidents are extremely rare.  Rifle marksmanship activities are indeed among the safest of all youth sports. Target shooting is a sport of control and discipline where everyone involved, including participants, instructors, coaches and range officers, is expected to know and apply the sport’s safety rules at all times.

The federal law that established the Civilian Marksmanship Program makes firearms safety one of its highest priorities. This law specifically states that a primary function of the CMP is “to instruct citizens of the United States in marksmanship; (and) to promote practice and safety in the use of firearms.” To fulfill this responsibility, the CMP produces a variety of safety materials. CMP safety materials can be ordered through the CMP E-Store at [http://estore.odcmp.com](http://estore.odcmp.com/) or visit visit <http://thecmp.org/communications/publications/> and click on the “Safety & Rules” tab.

## IMPORTANT SAFETY TIPS

* **ALWAYS** keep rifles unloaded until ready for use. If there is no need to load a rifle until later, don’t.
* **ALWAYS** check for any obstruction in the barrel whenever there is reason to suspect a blockage.
* **ALWAYS** positively identify the target and ensure a safe backstop is behind it before shooting.
* **ALWAYS** hold a rifle so the muzzle direction can be controlled if you fall or stumble.
* **NEVER** use alcohol or drugs with shooting. Anyone handling and firing a rifle must have a clear mind and be constantly alert.
* **NEVER** allow any rifle to point at you or pull a gun towards you by grasping its muzzle.
* **NEVER** attempt to load or unload a rifle inside a vehicle or building (except a properly constructed indoor range); there usually is no safe direction to point the muzzle.
* **NEVER** shoot at a hard object or flat surface or at water. Pellets can glance off hard materials like rock, glass or steel, or skip off the surface of water to fly in unpredictable and dangerous directions.
* **NEVER** set a loaded rifle down or leave an unattended rifle loaded. When a rifle is loaded, it will be controlled by the person who intends to fire it.

## RULES FOR SAFE RIFLE HANDLING

**1. MUZZLE**. Always keep gun muzzles pointed in a safe direction. Gun muzzles must never be pointed at other persons under any circumstance. On a range, the safest directions to point a gun muzzle are usually upward or downrange towards the target.

**2. ACTION**. When handling any rifle or firearm, the action must be open with a CBI (Clear Barrel Indicator), ECI (Empty Chamber Indicator) or OBI (Open Bolt Indicator) inserted. Gun actions must remain open except when the gun is on the firing line and preparation or firing periods have begun. When shooting is finished, the action must be open and a CBI/ECI/OBI must be inserted, even when the gun is on the firing line. The rifle action may be closed when it is placed in a gun case or storeroom, but must be opened and a CBI inserted as soon as it is picked up again.

**3. TRIGGER**.  Keep your finger off of the trigger until after placing the rifle in the shooting position and preparing to fire.. It is especially important to keep the finger outside of the trigger guard when loading the rifle and placing it in the shooting position.

TIP: An easy way to remember the Rules for Safe Gun Handling is to use the key word MAT. MAT, of course, stands for Muzzle-Action-Trigger.  MAT is also useful because that is the order in which the three safety rules must be applied. Whenever you handle a rifle always start by controlling the muzzle, then checking the action to ensure it is open, and finally, by keeping your finger off the trigger.

## ACCEPTING A RIFLE

When you pick up a rifle or take a rifle from another person, always grasp it with your fingers outside of the trigger guard! Do not place your index finger on the trigger when you pick up or take a rifle from someone. The only appropriate time to place your index finger inside the trigger guard and on the trigger is when you are starting to aim at an actual target. While holding the rifle with your fingers outside of the trigger guard, you can apply the three safe gun handling rules (MAT) that are paramount to assuring that you will never fire an unintentional shot.

## ZERO GUN ACCIDENTS

In addition to learning to follow safe rifle handling rules, range commands and established range and safety procedures, there are two additional safety concepts that must become part of your constant efforts to be safe with guns.

* Everyone is a Safety Officer. In an emergency when a safety hazard occurs or when someone in your presence does something unsafe with a rifle, you can and must become an “Emergency Safety Officer.” If you see someone close the action on a gun or fail to open the action of a gun while handling it, it is necessary for you to step in and make sure the action is opened.
* When on the range and someone is being unsafe, as an Emergency Safety Officer, you are authorized and obligated to yell “Stop! Stop! Stop!” immediately.
* Self-Discipline and Focus. Rifle safety is not a matter of learning safety rules and then assuming you will always be safe with rifles, it requires that you consciously practice safe muzzle control, check for open actions and keep your fingers outside of the trigger guard every time you handle a rifle. That requires self-discipline and focus. You must discipline yourself to always pay attention to safety—for yourself and for those around you.

Everyone who completes marksmanship and safety training learns how to be safe while handling any type of rifle or firearm. By learning and following the rules of safe gun handling and by practicing those rules during target rifle practice, you will not only assure safety during your rifle marksmanship training and competitions, but you will ensure that any encounter you have with a firearm is safe and enjoyable.

## PROTECT YOUR EYES & EARS

Everyone on the Bellevue West range where rifles are used is required to wear eyeglasses or shooting glasses to protect their eyes and ear plugs to improve concentration. Your vision and hearing are priceless and irreplaceable, so protect them. At the range, it is common courtesy not to begin firing until everyone nearby has been given an opportunity to don their eye and hearing protection.

## FIREARM TRANSPORTATION

When transporting a rifle from the armory to the range or elsewhere, there are some precautions to take to ensure safe transportation. To travel with rifles, follow these precautions:

* Keep firearms unloaded. The action on a firearm may be closed during travel, but only after you double-check to be sure the chamber is clear.
* Place rifles to be transported outside the school in a protective, locked case.
* When transporting rifles from the armory to the range, always carry rifles at the Port Arms position, with actions open and CBIs inserted.
* When using public transportation, check with the carrier prior to departure to find out what regulations apply.
* As soon as you arrive at the range with your firearms, open the action of any gun you bring to the range and insert a CBI.

## SAFE STORAGE OF RIFLES

Rifles not in use must be stored. The fundamental rule in storing rifles is to use a method of storage which ensures that no unauthorized or untrained person has access to them. Rifle storage procedures are also intended to protect rifles from damage or theft. Rules for storing rifles safely are:

* Rifles are stored in a locked gun cabinet.
* If not kept in a safe or locked cabinet, rifles should be secured from access by unauthorized persons by attaching a trigger lock.
* Rifles should be cleaned and lightly oiled periodically prior to storage.
* When a rifle is placed in storage, it must be checked to ensure it is unloaded and clear. You may then close the action and pull the trigger to release tension on the hammer or firing pin spring.
* When removing any rifle from storage, immediately open the action and insert a CBI if transporting it to the range.

## TRIGGER LOCKS

A trigger lock is a two-piece device that clamps over the trigger and trigger guard so that when it is locked in place, the trigger cannot be accessed or pulled. Trigger locks should never be used if the rifle is loaded or as a substitute for proper and safe rifle handling. A responsible adult who has had firearms safety training should retain control of the trigger lock key or combination. Trigger locks suitable for use with rifles sold by the CMP may be purchased from the CMP.

## AMMUNITION AND AMMUNITION STORAGE

ALWAYS use high quality, lead-free pellets that are clean, dry, in good condition, and .177 caliber. It is a good practice to store pellets separately from rifles. Pellets will be stored in separate, locked containers