



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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## Resource Document Tactical Weapons Safety *Weapons Handling*

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### Narrative:

Soldiers depend on their weapons and when a weapon fails, it could mean the difference between life and death. When Soldiers take precautions with their weapons such as thorough preventive maintenance checks and services and proper storage, they reduce the likelihood of a malfunction and possibly an accident.

Exposed to austere conditions around the world, Soldiers often endure challenges as they complete their missions. The same is true for their equipment; abrasive sand and extreme temperatures can wreak havoc on their weapon systems. Taking the time to clean their weapons and perform proper preventive maintenance checks and services consistently can make all the difference in the world.

Being familiar with a weapon is not good enough for safe handling. All Soldiers must be trained to a professional level with their assigned weapon and avoid complacency while handling them.

### Key Messages:

- A weapon can be a lifeline when there's no other option and who wants a weapon to malfunction when they need it the most? Soldiers should have a full understanding of the importance of maintaining their weapons.
- In addition to proper weapons care, Soldiers should always remember the basics of weapons handling. Proper clearing procedures are paramount; Soldiers are being injured and losing their lives to on duty negligent discharge accidents.
- Being familiar with a weapon is not good enough for safe handling. All Soldiers must be trained to a professional level with their assigned weapon and avoid complacency while handling them.
- Everyone needs to know, follow and enforce weapons safety standards. If you see someone

mishandling a weapon, say something. You may just save a life.

### **Talking points:**

- The enemy isn't the only thing taking Soldiers out of the fight. Soldiers are being injured and losing their lives to on duty negligent discharge accidents. Some of the most common reasons that negligent discharges occur are failure to follow proper clearing procedures and a lack of muzzle awareness.
- Conducting weapons classes that cover preliminary marksmanship instruction and proper clearing procedures, cross training Soldiers so they become proficient with all the unit's weapons and conducting periodic re-reinforcement training are just a few steps that leaders can take to reduce the chance of a weapons-related mishap.

### **Tips:**

It's a fact that Soldiers need to be qualified and proficient with their assigned weapons. They need to be equally proficient when it comes to range and weapons safety. They should always practice safe weapons handling procedures with their assigned weapons. Here's a simple acronym we use that can help Soldiers remember the basics of weapon safety: THINK

**T**reat every weapon as if it is loaded

**H**andle every weapon with care

**I**dentify the target before you fire

**N**ever point the muzzle at anything you don't intend to shoot

**K**eep the weapon on safe and your finger off the trigger until you intend to fire.

When it comes to weapons safety, no one can afford to take short cuts. Shoot Straight – Shoot Safe!

### **Historical Reference:**

<https://safety.army.mil/groundsafety/>

<https://safety.army.mil/rangeweaponssafety/Home/tabid/1435/Default.aspx>

(AKO login required)

<https://safety.army.mil/rangeweaponssafety/Videos/tabid/1451/Default.aspx>

(AKO login required)

### **Statistics:**

- Between fiscal 2007 and 2011, 15 Soldiers died in on duty, weapon-handling accidents (related to range/target firing or negligent discharges) and 122 were injured.

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