

Firearms and weapons

Relevant Legislation and Documents

Hazardous Substances & New Organisms (HSNO) Act 1996

(fireworks, safety ammunition, and other explosives transfer regulations 2003)

Arms Act 1983 and the Arms Regulations 1992

Arms Code 1993

An Armourer is defined as a person licensed to use firearms on a set and competent to carry out the duties of Armourer.

An armourer requires one or more of the following licences:

- A type **A** firearms licence allows the holder to have and use sporting type shotguns and rifles.
- A type **C** firearm licence allows the holder to have pistols and or restricted weapons. There is an endorsement for “employees of theatrical groups or film making organisations”. This endorsement is subject to the condition that the holder shall not under any circumstance use live ammunition in the pistol or restricted weapon. This licence is subject to strict storage security and the firearms are registered with the Police.
- Type **E** firearms licence is required for people to have military style semi-automatic rifles and shotguns.

So the most common required for theatre is a Type **C**.

Guidelines

An unloaded weapon without ammunition (live, blank or dummy) present is considered a prop, and can be handled by armourers or property masters. This individual should have all required licenses and permits for the types of firearms to be used, and should be knowledgeable about local laws concerning the transportation, storage and use of firearms.

- 1) Only firearms that have been deactivated should be used for non firing props. The firearm should be deactivated, modified or repaired only by qualified gunsmiths with the approval of the manufacturer.
- 2) If ammunition is present, then a weapons expert with the appropriate licence should be present and responsible for the weapons and ammunition.
- 3) It is advisable to inform the local police authority of an intention to discharge a firearm in performance.
- 4) Live ammunition should never be used, or even be allowed on the set.
- 5) Only use the particular type of ammunition designed for a specified firearm. Manufacturer guidelines for weapons and ammunition should always be followed.
- 6) Do not modify factory-loaded blank ammunition. Use the lightest and safest loads of blank ammunition possible. Only regular or crimped safety blanks should be used on sets.
- 7) If dummy bullets are used, it is absolutely essential to ensure there is a method to distinguish them from live bullets. The dummy bullets should be filled with shot so the bullet will rattle, or some other definitive identification means used to distinguish live and dummy rounds.

- 8) The weapons expert should know all the expiration dates, manufacturer warnings, and storage and handling procedures associated with the blank ammunition being used.

Firearms /weapons on the Set

- 1) All personnel (crew, actors, etc.) should be informed in advance of the intention to use firearms.
- 2) No one should be forced to use a firearm.
- 3) All performers using handguns must be given instruction in their proper and safe handling. This should be listed on the call sheet.
- 4) Even if firearms are to be used in a scene, rehearsal should be done with non-firing weapons.
- 5) The weapons expert should have time to discuss the use of firearms in a scene and related safety requirements with the director and performer.
- 6) The weapons expert is responsible for instruction of performers in the safe use of guns.
- 7) Firearms should never be given to someone without first determining that he or she is knowledgeable in their proper and safe use.
- 8) All ammunition and firearms - even private ones - should be turned over to the weapons expert when the weapons come on stage.
- 9) Except when in performance or for necessary rehearsals, all firearms should be locked up by the weapons expert, with sign in and sign out procedures.
- 10) Weapons and ammunition should be stored separately whenever possible.
- 11) No smoking signs must be posted where powder or blank ammunition is stored.
- 12) All firearms should always be treated as if they were loaded.
- 13) Playing around with firearms should be forbidden.
- 14) Guns should never be pointed at anyone, even when being fired during a scene.
- 15) The crew and other personnel on the set should be warned prior to firing of weapons.
- 16) Firearms should be loaded and unloaded only by the weapons expert.
- 17) Loading and checking of weapons should occur just before they are required on stage.
- 18) Guns should be unloaded and checked as soon as they are off stage and then locked up by the weapons expert.
- 19) Guns should be checked and cleaned before and after each use and inventoried after each day's use by the weapons expert.
- 20) A firearm should never be fired if the barrel is clogged with dirt or other foreign matter.
- 21) The gun should never be put down in such a way as to clog the barrel or workings.
- 22) Jams and malfunctions should only be worked on by the weapons expert.
- 23) If the cause of malfunction is unknown, the gun should be taken out of use until it is determined to be safe.
- 24) Risk assessments must be conducted for the use of any firearms or weapons to ensure there is minimum risk to those in the workplace and in the audience.
- 25) Written procedures documenting the use of firearms and weapons shall be implemented.

26) All swords, knives and blades must be blunt.