

Firearms, Replicas, Blanks, and Dummy Rounds

ACTSAFE SAFETY BULLETIN #1



A firearm, including one loaded with blanks, can inflict severe damage to anything or anyone if safety protocols are not followed. The guidelines in this bulletin are intended to give recommendations on the safe handling, use, transportation, and storage of firearms, including replica firearms. This safety bulletin should be distributed with the call sheet each day that firearms will be used.

Firearms include shotguns, pistols, machine guns, rifles, and **muzzle loaders**. In the federal *Firearms Act*, a *firearm* is defined as “a barrelled weapon from which any shot, bullet or other projectile can be discharged and that is capable of causing serious bodily injury or death to a person, and includes any frame or receiver of such a barrelled weapon and anything that can be adapted for use as a firearm.”

These guidelines also cover firearms loaded with **blank rounds** and **dummy inert rounds**. Dummy rounds do not have a firing component but are often used by performers to simulate the loading of a firearm.

Live ammunition

Live ammunition must never be present on a production set, in a transport vehicle, or in an employee’s possession while travelling to or working on any motion picture or television production.

All use, handling, storage, and transportation of firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds must be in

compliance with all applicable federal, provincial, and local laws and regulations.

Commonly used terms

You’ll find a list of terms at the back of this bulletin. When these terms first appear in this bulletin, they are indicated in **bold type**.

The property master or their designate* (i.e., assistant property master or **armourer**) is the person who acts in the interest of the production for obtaining, maintaining, handling, and overseeing the use of all firearms on set. The property master must maintain all necessary licences, permits, and documentation for firearms and blank ammunition for the jurisdiction in which work is being performed. The property master will work in conjunction with the production to ensure adherence to these guidelines.

The production, in consultation with the property master, should consider the use of prop firearms such as rubber guns, **non-guns**, non-functioning replicas, and replicas with recoil simulators. Though these devices are not firearms, standard firearms safety practices should still be observed while using these devices.

* **Anytime the term *property master* is used in this bulletin, it includes the property master and their designate.**

RESPONSIBILITIES – PRODUCTION

Establish safety protocols for all firearm-related production events.

Ensure that a sufficient amount of time has been allotted for training, safety meetings, and rehearsal.

Licences and permits

Check what specific licences or permits are required at the local, provincial, and/or federal level through the [chief firearms officer \(CFO\)](#). CFOs

are Canadian officials who are responsible for licensing, transfers, authorizations, and approvals related to firearms.

Identify the use of firearms and gunfire on the film permit application and have law enforcement on set if required by the jurisdiction. Local law enforcement must be notified prior to any firearm use. The studio security and safety departments should also be notified.



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Property master qualifications

Ensure the property master's qualifications and experience are adequate for working with the type of firearms being used. Their qualifications include knowledge of the safe handling, use, transportation, and storage of firearms and ammunition, as well as familiarity with the types of blanks that will be used.

If the property master is going to be working with real firearms, they must have, at minimum, a valid Restricted Possession and Acquisition Licence (RPAL) and be represented under a firearms business licence held by the employer (e.g., the production company).

If the property master doesn't have an RPAL or there is no firearms business licence, they can still work with prop firearms such as rubber or plastic replicas, or metal functioning replicas. The CFO has given federal permission to use a Temporary Authority to Possess Replicas for Entertainment Purposes. This permission is found in the *Firearms Act* and is for the entertainment industry only. Working with non-guns that use electronically discharged squibs may require the user to possess a valid Special Effects Pyrotechnics Permit.

Coordination with the property master

Ensure that the property master knows who the appropriate production representative is to communicate any safety-related concerns.

Allow the property master to safely perform all assigned duties and responsibilities. In order to accomplish this, the property master should be adequately staffed for the specific scene or sequence. Considerations for adequate staffing include the:

- Number of firearms
- Types of firearms (e.g., a single, belt-fed assault rifle will require two armourers)
- Layout of the set or location (e.g., one performer on a building rooftop and another on the street below)
- Logistics of the scene (e.g., performer begins sequence on one building and finishes in another)

RESPONSIBILITIES – PROPERTY MASTER

The property master is responsible for the following:

- Be present whenever a firearm is being used or handled.
- Know the standards, rules, and regulations for the firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds used in the production, and about the practices for the safe handling, use, transportation, and storage of the firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds that are used in the entertainment industry. This knowledge may come from various sources, such as industry-specific training or experience.
- If not familiar with a firearm being used, consult an expert such as an armourer who is familiar with it.
- Ensure that all firearms are either in the possession of the property master or are returned to the property master after being handled by performers.
- Establish and ensure the **custody and control** of all firearms at all times.
- Designate and supervise additional qualified persons working under the property master to assist as necessary.
- Confirm that the correct firearms permits have been obtained for the possession and use of production firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds.
- Securely store firearms separately from blanks in accordance with federal, provincial, and local laws.



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- Know and adhere to manufacturer's warnings, expiration dates, storage instructions, and handling procedures for firearms, blanks, and dummy rounds.
- Only load firearms with blanks or dummy rounds immediately before they are used in a scene.
- Allow performers and crew who are required to stand near the firing sequence to witness the loading of the firearm.
- Use the appropriate load of blanks and blank-fire adapter, if applicable, required for the scene.

TRAINING

No one is to be issued a firearm unless they have been trained in the safe handling, use, proper firing procedures, and proper use of all mechanical safety devices for each type of firearm. If there is any uncertainty as to the qualifications or competencies of the person who will use the firearm, the production, in consultation with the property master, must determine if additional training is required and must ensure adequate time is provided for such training.

All performers and crew who are in proximity to working firearms should be trained about safe zones and about the proper conduct of personnel who will be present near firearms. This training can be accomplished through the safety meeting or by other means as determined by production management.

All training must be documented and reflected on the production report.

SAFETY MEETINGS

Before any firearm is used in a rehearsal, an on-camera sequence, or off-camera, the production will conduct a safety meeting to acquaint performers and crew members with relevant safety issues. This safety meeting must include a walk-through and/or dry run with the property master and any relevant performers or crew, such as the 1st AD, stunt coordinator, or anyone who will be using or handling a firearm.

If there are any significant changes during production, the 1st AD will hold an additional safety meeting so everyone understands the proposed changes. Any changes must be noted on the production report. The property master is to attend all safety meetings and rehearsals.

Meeting topics

In the safety meeting, discuss the following items:

- The types of firearms that will be used, their safety features, and what to expect when they are used.
- The type of blanks and dummy rounds that will be used and how they can be distinguished from each other.
- The firearms sequence, including intended action, possible deviations, plans to abort, emergency procedures, and the chain of command.
- Aiming points and muzzle positions relative to the performers and crew who may be in close proximity to the line of fire.
- Additional safety measures that have been implemented (e.g., personal protective equipment, shields or barriers to protect workers, camera lens protection, and lock-offs).
- The firearms custody and control process.
- Introduce the first aid attendant and other appropriate emergency personnel.
- The importance of treating all firearms, whether they are real, rubber, or replica firearms as if they are working, loaded firearms.



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- Instruct all performers and crew who are not required for the firearms sequence to clear the area after the safety meeting has concluded and to not return until an "all clear" signal has been given.
- The establishment and use of effective communication channels and methods (e.g., voice commands, walkie-talkie communication, and hand signals).
- Specific terms that will be used during communication (e.g., "gun is hot," "gun is clear and safe," "misfire").
- Answer any performer or crew questions concerning the firearms sequence.

REHEARSALS

A rehearsal is to be conducted before the use of a firearm so performers and crew know the intended range of action and appropriate minimum safe distances. The property master will determine the

minimum safe distances. This rehearsal will also establish the proper filming angles and safe areas for the performers and crew.

SAFETY PROTOCOLS

- No person is to be coaxed, coerced, or otherwise forced into handling a firearm.
- Non-essential personnel will be excluded from the set when firearms are used to enhance the safety of the performers and crew.
- Protective shields, eye and hearing protection, and other applicable personal protective equipment will be made available and should be utilized by all personnel involved in the firearm sequence.
- The performers and crew, including the sound department, will be notified of the types and loads of blanks that will be used.
- All personnel should remain at a pre-determined safe distance whenever a firearm is loaded, handled, or fired.
- The property master should inspect the firearm and barrel before every firing sequence and confirm verbally to performers and crew that the firearm is safe.
- Only the property master should load the firearm with blanks, using only the number of blanks required for the take. Immediately unload the firearm after the scene. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for the handling, storage, and disposal of blanks.
- Dummy rounds must have an audible "BB" and a simulated primer.

Performers

- Whenever the property master gives a firearm to a performer, the property master must advise the performer of the type of blank or dummy round being used and afford the other performers, and crew the supervised opportunity to verify the same.
- Utilize all safety devices until the firearm is ready to be used.
- Anyone handling the firearm will refrain from pointing a firearm at any person, including themselves. If it is necessary to aim a firearm at another person on camera, consult the property master to determine available options.
- The performer is never to place their finger on the trigger until the performer is ready to fire.
- There should be no horseplay with any firearm (including rubber, replica, and prop).



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- Never discharge the firearm when the barrel is obstructed by anything other than a blank-fire adapter that the property master has installed or approved.
- If the firearm malfunctions or misfires, keep your finger off the trigger, point the firearm at the ground or in another safe direction, away from other performers and crew, and call for the property master to clear the firearm and declare it safe.
- Firearms must always be returned to the property master as soon as the filming sequence is complete. Never return to your trailer or background holding or leave the set with a firearm.

AFTER EACH FIREARM SEQUENCE

- No one should be allowed to step onto the set until the property master clears all firearms and announces to the performers and crew that the firearms are clear, and it is now safe to move around the set. This typically occurs by announcing "all clear."
- Never leave a firearm (including a replica, rubber, or prop) unattended.
- Blank-firing firearms will be immediately unloaded after the scene by the property master.
- All malfunctions must be reported immediately to the property master. Malfunctioning or jammed firearms should be corrected by the property master or taken out of service until the problem is corrected.
- The property master should inspect the firearm and barrel after every firing sequence.

UPON COMPLETION OF THE USE OF FIREARMS

- All firearms must be returned to the property master, who must ensure that they are cleaned, checked, and inventoried at the end of each day. Production must allow time for this procedure.
- There should be a sweep of the area for spent casings at the end of each day. The spent casings should be disposed of properly.
- Ensure the safe storage of firearms, prop firearms (e.g., rubber guns, non-guns, non-functioning replicas, and replicas with recoil simulators), blanks, and dummy rounds.

Storage requirements

When not in use, all firearms and prop firearms must be stored on the props truck in either a safe or locked magazine, and the truck must also be locked. If working in a studio, the firearms and prop firearms must be stored in either a safe or locked magazine located within the props department office in a separate, lockable room.



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TERMS

Armourer

The professional, skilled, and properly licensed technician who is hired by the production, works under the direction and supervision of the property master, and maintains control of the firearms on set.

Blank-fire adapter (plug)

A device installed into the barrel of the firearm by the property master to facilitate functionality with blanks.

Blank round (blank or blank ammunition)

A cartridge consisting of a primer cap, a shell case, and a quantity of gunpowder, but that does not have a projectile. Blank rounds are produced by a licensed manufacturer using specialized, automated, or manual loading equipment.

Custody and control

The process to establish dominion and control of the firearm. It specifies who removes the firearm from a secure lockup, who checks in with the first assistant director or their designee, who gives the firearm to the performer, and who places the firearm back into a secure lock-up. Once a chain of custody is established, any deviation from this should be addressed at a safety meeting.

Dummy inert rounds (dummy rounds)

Inert cartridges consisting of a simulated primer (usually a machined, solid metal disk), a cartridge case, and a projectile. A dummy round must have a "BB" inside to give an audible indication that it is inert.

Live ammunition

One or more loaded cartridges or shotgun shells consisting of a primer cap, a shell case, a quantity of gunpowder, and a projectile.

For the purpose of this bulletin, live ammunition does not include the following:

- Blank rounds and dummy rounds
- Projectiles (regardless of the material or manufacturer) that are intended solely to create bullet-hit type special effects, such as projectiles fired from air rifles, air pistols, air and/or gas-operated capsule guns, paintball guns, blow guns, squib-fired trunnion guns, crossbows or crossbow-type devices, slingshots, or any other special-effects device designed to propel a projectile and create a bullet-hit type special effect
- Any propelled projectile required to be photographed in flight. See Safety Bulletin #30, Recommended Guidelines for Safely Working with Edged, Piercing, and Projectile Props

All such non-live-ammunition projectiles are to be supervised and operated under the direction of the licensed special effects technician in charge.

Muzzle loader

A firearm loaded through the barrel's front opening.

Non-gun

A firearm replica designed to accept and discharge small explosive charges by an electric impulse to create a simulated muzzle flash and noise. Non-guns are to be treated with the same safety precautions as an actual firearm.



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RELATED RESOURCES

- [Canadian Criminal Code, Part III — Firearms and Other Weapons](#) (Government of Canada)
- [Canadian Firearms Program](#) (RCMP)
- [Chief Firearms Officer](#) (British Columbia and Yukon: 1-800-731-4000)
- [Firearms Act](#) (Government of Canada)
- [General Crew Firearms Safety](#) (Acts safe course)
- [Props Firearms Safety](#) (Acts safe course)

Acts safe Safety Association

Acts safe (www.actsafe.ca) is a not-for-profit health and safety association supporting British Columbia's arts and entertainment industries. Acts safe provides resources and training to employers, workers, and supervisors. We are always here to provide information relevant to best practices around health and safety in the arts and entertainment industries in B.C.

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