



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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Resource Document **Privately Owned** **Weapons** ***Clear the Weapon***

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U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center

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Narrative:

Whether Soldiers are handling a military weapon or a privately owned weapon, safety should always be a top concern. One of the leading causes of negligent discharge accidents is the failure to properly clear a weapon.

An all too common scenario is one where an individual is injured while attempting to clean a weapon. Either they fail to clear the weapon properly or simply assume it was unloaded and make no attempt to clear it all.

Following the procedures in owner's/owner's manual and the basic tenants of weapons safety are precautions that allow Soldiers to enjoy their privately owned weapons without risking lives and limbs.

Key Messages:

- 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.
- When performing any type of maintenance on a weapon, your first step should always be to clear it in accordance with the owner's/operator's manual.
- Soldiers should never assume that because they're familiar with one type of weapon they're an expert on all weapons.
- Practicing proper muzzle awareness, making sure that you keep the weapon pointed in a safe direction while performing maintenance and ensuring that you never point a weapon at anything you don't intend to shoot, will prevent a tragedy in the event of a clearing error.

Tip

S:

It's a fact that Soldiers need to be qualified and proficient with their assigned weapons and the same goes for privately owned weapons. They should always practice safe weapons handling procedures with all weapons and here's a simple acronym that can help Soldiers remember the basics of weapon safety: THINK

Treat every weapon as if it is loaded
Handle every weapon with care
Identify the target before you fire

Never point the muzzle at anything you don't intend to shoot

KeeP 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 2008 and 2012, 18 Soldiers died in off duty, weapons-handling accidents (related to negligent discharges) and six have perished thus far in fiscal 2013.