Safe Weapons Handling Procedures

1. Unintentional discharges are preventable however, they continue to occur at an alarming rate. Commanders and leaders must ensure Soldiers are trained on appropriate standards and enforce standards for weapons safety and clearing procedures.

2. There is no difference between unloading and cleaning a weapon. Unloading a weapon is simply one step in the process of cleaning. At no time should a weapon be unloaded and not cleared.

3. A significant number of mishaps resulting in injuries and loss of life have been associated with unintentional discharges during weapons cleaning and subsequent function checks with ammunition present.

4. Soldiers should always remember the basics of safe weapons handling. Following these guidelines will reduce mishaps.

5. Weapons issue and turn-in procedures:
   a. During the issue and turn-in of weapons, both the armorer and the Soldier will visually verify that the weapon does not contain any ammunition. This procedure will be conducted whether ammunition was issued or not.
   b. Each weapon system will be cleared before turn-in and upon direction of the supervisor, individuals will proceed directly to the turn-in point. Clearing should be supervised at all times.

6. Ammoner responsibilities include:
   a. Verify each individual’s authority to bear arms before issuing weapons or ammunition.
   b. Ensure each weapon is cleared and visually inspected prior to issue or turn-in to verify all ammunition has been removed.
   c. Issue all weapons shoulder stock assembly (butt) first, muzzle elevated, slide or bolt locked to the rear and on SAFE.
   d. Allow only one person at a time to approach the issue and turn-in area.

f. Leaders should supervise weapons clearing at all times whether ammunition is present or not. Leaders need to remain involved to ensure ammunition has not inadvertently been left in the weapon or placed in the weapon in a manner that can result in an unintentional discharge. Leader enforcement of muzzle orientation is particularly important during weapons clearing procedures.

g. When clearing weapons on ranges, orientate the weapon downrange during the clearing process. When a clearing barrel is required by local SOPs, use the requirements outlined in this pamphlet.

h. Commanders at all levels are mandated to ensure a range safety program is in place. The range safety program will cover OIC and RSO duties as outlined in AR 385-63 and DA Pam 385-63. The commander will ensure the RSO is qualified on the weapons systems to be fired.

i. Leaders or vehicle commanders will ensure weapons systems are clear before moving off the range and before installing or removing weapons from the mount.

j. Leaders or vehicle commanders will ensure a weapon fired from a vehicle mount is coordinated with dismounted elements in the area and the firing sector is clear. (An example would be a Bradley commander maintaining a visual on their sector of fire from the vehicle commander’s hatch, not through the weapon’s scope, ensuring dismounted elements remain clear of the surface danger zone of the weapon system used.)
**WARNING!** DO NOT INSTALL OR REMOVE A LOADED WEAPON FROM A MOUNTING BRACKET.

---

**M16 SERIES RIFLE/ M4 SERIES CARBINE**

**Unloading and clearing procedures**

1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Place the weapon selector lever on SAFE.  
   (NOTE: If the weapon is not cocked, the lever cannot be pointed toward SAFE.) Remove magazine by depressing magazine catch button and pulling the magazine down.
3. Lock the bolt open.
   (1) Pull the charging handle to the rear.
   (2) Press and hold the bottom of the bolt catch.
   (3) Allow the bolt to move forward until it engages the bolt catch.
   (4) Return the charging handle to the forward position.
4. Visually inspect the chamber to ensure it contains no ammunition.
5. Allow the bolt to move forward by pressing the upper portion of the bolt catch.
6. Close the ejection port cover.

**WARNING:** Round may fall to surface and possibly explode.

6. Pull and lock the bolt to the rear, leaving the retracting slide handle to the rear.
7. (NOTE: Step 7 is for the fixed M48 turret type and fixed type.) Move the M10 charger lock selector to the rear. Charge the weapon.

**WARNING:** Chamber may be hot. Use caution while inspecting T-slot.

8. Visually inspect the chamber and T-slot for rounds (in darkness, the gunner must feel the chamber and T-slot to ensure they are clear).
9. Press the bolt latch release and ease the bolt forward with the retracting slide handle.
10. (NOTE: Step 10 is for fixed M48 turret type and fixed type.) Move the M10 charger lock selector forward and pull back on the retracting slide handle until a click is heard, and then ease the bolt forward.
11. Close the cover.
12. If the weapon is to be stored, press the trigger.

---

**M9 SEMIAUTOMATIC PISTOL**

**Unloading and clearing procedures**

1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Place decocking/safety lever in the SAFE position.
3. Remove the magazine by pressing the magazine catch button and pulling the magazine down.
4. Grasp the slide serrations and fully retract the slide to remove the chambered cartridge. Lock the slide to the rear by pushing the slide stop up. Check the receiver and chamber to ensure these areas contain no ammunition.
5. Release the slide by pushing the slide stop down. Ensure the decocking/safety lever is in the SAFE position.

**M11 SEMIAUTOMATIC PISTOL**

**Unloading and clearing procedures**

1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Thumb down the decocking lever.
3. Remove the magazine by pressing the magazine catch button and pulling the magazine down.
4. Grasp the slide serrations and fully retract the slide to remove the chambered cartridge. Lock the slide to the rear by pressing the slide stop. Check the receiver and chamber to ensure these areas contain no ammunition.
5. Release the slide by pushing the slide catch lever. Thumb down the decocking lever.

**M2/M2A1 (.50 CAL) MACHINE GUN**

**Unloading and clearing procedures**

1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Place the weapon selector lever on SAFE.
3. If ammunition is present, grasp the rim of the cartridge and pull it rearward out of the barrel.
4. Pull the barrel rearward until it locks in the closed position. Visually ensure the safety lever is in the SAFE position.

---

**M249 MACHINE GUN**

**Unloading and clearing procedures**

1. Point the weapon in a safe direction.
2. Move the safety to FIRE position (red ring showing) by pushing it to the left. With the right palm up, pull the cocking handle completely to the rear, ensuring the bolt locks to the rear. While still holding the cocking handle, move the safety to the SAFE position (red ring hidden) by pushing it to the right. Return the cocking handle assembly to the fully forward and locked position.
3. Prior to raising the feed tray cover, look in a safe direction.
   a. Belt-fed: Raise the feed tray cover and remove any ammunition or links from the feed tray.
   b. Magazine-fed: Push down on the magazine release tab and pull the magazine out. Then, raise the cover.
4. Conduct a five-point safety check for brass, links or ammunition.
   (1) Check the feed pawl assembly under the cover.
   (2) Check the feed tray.
   (3) Lift the feed tray and inspect the chamber.
   (4) Check magazine well.
   (5) Check the space between the face of the bolt and the chamber, as well as the space under the bolt and operating rod assembly.
5. Lower the feed tray and close the feed cover, making sure it locks shut. Move the safety to the FIRE position (red ring showing) by pushing it to the left. With the right palm up, pull the cocking handle to the rear. While fully depressing the trigger with the left hand, ease the bolt forward to close and lock. Release the trigger. The safety must not be able to be moved to SAFE.
   (NOTE: Be sure the bolt is forward with the safety on FIRE when the weapon is not in use.)

---

**M203 GRENADE LAUNCHER**

**Unloading and clearing procedures**

1. Point the weapon in a safe direction. (NOTE: Prior to clearing the M203, the M16 or M4 must be cleared first.)
2. Push in the barrel release lever and slide the barrel forward. Watch to see if a round extracts.
3. Move the safety lever to SAFE position. Inspect the barrel to ensure ammunition is not present. If ammunition is present, grasp the rim of the cartridge and pull it rearward out of the barrel.
4. Inspect the barrel to ensure ammunition is not present. If ammunition is present, grasp the rim of the cartridge and pull it rearward out of the barrel.
5. Pivot the barrel into the receiver until it locks in the closed position. Visually ensure the safety lever is in the SAFE position.

---

**M320 GRENADE LAUNCHER**

**Unloading and clearing procedures**

1. Point the weapon in a safe direction. (NOTE: Prior to clearing the M320, the M16 or M4 must be cleared first.)
2. Move the safety lever to the SAFE (S) position.
3. Press the barrel release and allow the barrel to swing out to the left side of the receiver.
4. Inspect the barrel to ensure ammunition is not present. If ammunition is present, grasp the rim of the cartridge and pull it rearward out of the barrel.
5. Pivot the barrel into the receiver until it locks in the closed position. Visually ensure the safety is in the SAFE (S) position.