

# North East Lincolnshire Target Club

## Range One (Firearm) Procedures & Safety Information

The following information is conveyed to new Probationary members during their initial instruction in the safe handling of firearms and ammunition.

**Probationary members are always supervised by Club appointed Range Officers whilst on range.**

**All Range Officers' (RO) commands must be obeyed by everyone on the range without question. No one may enter the shooting bays until command no. 2 below is given.**

### **STANDARD RANGE COMMANDS:**

**NOTE – All persons present on the range must stay behind the shooting line unless the RO has declared a “RANGE CLEAR” condition; no one is to go down range to place targets etc. unless this is clearly stated.**

- 1) **“MUFFS”** - Everyone on the range must don hearing protection upon this command. Shooters should also don protective safety glasses at this point (unless already wearing spectacles). Hearing protection should not be removed until the "Range Clear" command 4 is given as others may still be shooting. Protective earmuffs, earplugs and safety glasses are provided by the Club for use on the range.
- 2)
  - a) **“SHOOTERS TO THE LINE”** - Shooters may enter their respective firing bay;
  - b) **“FACE FORWARD, LOAD AND MAKE READY”** – Shooters may pick up their firearm, load, charge/chamber a round and address their target;
  - c) **“COMMENCE FIRING”** – Shooters may start firing and continue until they have finished or receive another range command from the RO.
- 3) **“STOP! STOP! STOP!”** – An emergency command upon which all shooters must immediately stop shooting, unload their firearm and place them on the bench of the bay, empty with actions open and uppermost. Black powder shooters must obey RO's instructions for discharging any remaining loaded chambers. Shooters must vacate their bay immediately upon placing their cleared firearm on the bench.
- 4) **“RANGE CLEAR”** - This command will be given after the RO has checked that all firearms in the bays are clear and safe. At this point all bays will be vacant and persons present on the range may remove hearing/eye protection and go forward of the shooting line to retrieve/change/score targets. **NO ONE MAY ENTER A BAY DURING A RANGE CLEAR PERIOD.**
- 5) Once all targets are reset and the RO has confirmed that all persons are back behind the bays, the above sequence can start again at range command 1.

## **IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:**

- 1) **Clearing firearms upon entry & exit to the range** - When bringing a firearm onto the range you must show it open and clear (empty chamber) to the RO and await their instruction to shelve or place it in a bay. When leaving a shooting bay you must again show your gun to be open and clear to the RO before replacing it into a gun bag or case.
- 2) **Muzzle direction** – any firearm (or airgun) must always be pointed in a safe direction away from any persons present. When loading or unloading in a shooting bay you must always point the muzzle down range (towards the target). The muzzle must never 'sweep' the range so as to point in an unsafe direction (i.e. away from the target or towards anyone present on-range).

**NEVER, under any circumstances, must a gun be pointed at any person, even if it is unloaded.**

- 3) **Trigger finger** – your finger must never be on the trigger unless you are addressing the target and ready to take a shot. Never pick up or handle a firearm with your finger in the trigger guard. Always remove your trigger finger from the guard between shots and when loading/unloading. Your 'natural' safe position should always be with your trigger finger lying outside of the trigger guard, against the frame of the gun.
- 4) **Safety Catches** - these vary dependent upon firearm type and are designed primarily to allow a loaded gun to be carried safely. For target shooting purposes loaded guns are NEVER carried away from the shooting positions on the range and therefore the use of safety catches is a matter for the individual shooter's discretion. If you feel safer applying the safety catch whilst reloading, operating the firearm's mechanism or checking your target through a spotting scope then please do so.

**Safety catches must never be used as an alternative to safe muzzle direction and trigger finger discipline.**

- 5) **Jams** – experienced when the operating mechanism and (usually) the feeding of rounds of ammunition into the breech has failed. These will be experienced mainly in the use of semi-automatic firearms and sometimes in lever-action guns when empty cases fail to clear the ejection port and/or prevent the next live round being chambered correctly. As with all firearm malfunctions, the first thing to do will be to remove any magazine from the firearm whilst maintaining safe muzzle direction and trigger discipline. It may be necessary to manually work the action of the firearm to clear any obstructing round/case or indeed may require the use of a screwdriver or rod to extract a case that will not leave the breech. If you are uncertain as to the nature of any failure with your firearm or feel that you require assistance, you should raise your hand to alert the RO to your circumstance.

Some issues are specific to particular types of firearm:

**Semi-automatics** - beware of the cocking lever on semi-automatic firearms, as these may be of a reciprocating type which will move rapidly with each shot. Always keep your hands and fingers in a safe position relative to the action of the lever.

**Firearms with tube-fed magazines** - when re-inserting the magazine follower take care not to position your fingers in front of the muzzle.

**Lever-action mechanisms** (e.g. Marlin) - when loading these guns it is essential to ensure that the action is fully closed before feeding the rounds into the loading gate. If the gate closes before you have finished loading the desired number of rounds you should either carry on and shoot the rounds already loaded or alternatively unload the gun and start from the beginning. Further rounds should not be forced into the gate once it has closed on a round. Lever-actions should not be forced if an obstruction is felt. Failure to observe these actions may result in damage to the firearm.

**Lever-release mechanisms** (e.g. SGC 9mm) – these firearms use an interrupted semi-automatic system that ejects the fired case but requires the user to manually operate a bolt release lever to chamber the next round. It is essential that the release lever is not depressed at the same time as pulling the trigger as damage to the mechanism may occur. As such, trigger finger discipline must be exercised with particular care when using firearms of this type.

## **AMMUNITION FAILURES**

There are two basic types of ammunition failure which you may experience and with which you must be fully familiar: **Misfires** and **Under-powered rounds**.

It is **crucial** that you do not confuse the two as the application of the incorrect remedy will have serious consequences and could cause injury to yourself or others.

### **MISFIRES** (aka HANGFIRES)

Symptom: upon pulling the trigger on a chambered round, only a 'click' is heard as the hammer falls and there is no sound of a discharge.

Possible causes: faulty primer; weak hammer strike; lack of priming compound in rim-fire ammunition; contaminated powder, etc. Note that miscounting rounds can result in a similar experience if pulling the trigger on an empty chamber; in the interests of safety you must follow the same course of action as for a misfire.

Remedy: **Warning** – the round may ignite following a delay, so safe muzzle must continue to be observed! Wait for 30 seconds (in case of delayed ignition); unload faulty round and clear firearm; hand misfired round to the RO for safe disposal.

## **UNDER-POWERED ROUNDS**

Symptom: upon pulling the trigger on a chambered round, the round ignites with a noticeably quieter discharge than normal and with little or no recoil. There may be insufficient energy to drive the bullet or ball completely through the barrel resulting in a serious blockage. Sometimes referred to as a 'pop'.

Possible causes: low or no powder charge; contaminated powder etc.

Remedy: remove magazine/unload any remaining rounds and clear the chamber before examining barrel for obstruction. If an obstruction is found then the barrel must be cleared with a rod. **Never** fire a second round into a blocked barrel as this can cause catastrophic failure and injury or death! Be absolutely sure that the barrel is un-blocked before re-commencing firing. When using black powder guns notify RO and follow instructions.

**Remember the ROs are there to help you** - please do not hesitate to ask them for assistance or advice regarding any safety or firearm operation matters of which you are unsure.