

Weapons and Ammunition

Index Code: 402

Effective Date: 10/01/02 (Revised: 1/18/2022)

I. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to provide deputies employed by the Office of the Sheriff with guidelines on the carrying, wearing, and use of issued weapons and ammunition, and personal weapons used in an official capacity.

II. Policy

Deputies, both on and off duty, may only use weapons and ammunition meeting the specifications outlined in Index Code 403. In addition, the following regulations apply.

III. Firearms: On Duty

A. Deputies will wear the issued firearm and holster, loaded with issued ammunition, when on duty, in uniform, or otherwise representing the Office of the Sheriff unless previously approved by their Division Commander. Plainclothes deputies must conceal their firearm from public view unless they are conspicuously and visually identified as a law enforcement officer.

B. Deputies may carry approved personal firearms while on duty to supplement issued firearms, provided they meet the specifications listed in Index Code 403 and the requirements of this directive. Supplemental firearms must be concealed from public view when not in use.

C. Deputies must carry enough ammunition to fully reload the issued firearm, or their approved personal firearm being used in an official capacity, at least two times. Non-uniformed deputies and deputies in administrative assignments may carry the reloads in their vehicles instead of on their persons. Additional ammunition is not required for firearms being carried as supplemental weapons.

IV. Firearms: Off Duty

A. Deputies are encouraged to carry an approved firearm off duty, but are not required to do so unless they are in uniform or operating a vehicle owned, leased, or utilized by the Office of the Sheriff.

B. No deputy may carry, wear, or use a firearm while his/her ability to perform as a law enforcement officer is impaired for any reason.

C. Unless the deputy is in uniform, all weapons carried while off duty must be concealed from public view when not in use.

D. Firearms will be carried in a properly fitting holster, fanny pack, or purse designed to carry that particular weapon.

V. Training Requirements

The following requirements apply to all sworn members of the Office of the Sheriff:

A. Demonstrate proficiency in the use of authorized firearms before being granted approval to carry such weapons. Deputies who are unable to qualify with an issued firearm must successfully complete remedial training before resuming official duties. In addition, deputies who are unable to qualify with an approved personal firearm may not carry that weapon in an official capacity.

B. Receive in-service training on the use of force at least annually.

C. Demonstrate proficiency with all approved lethal weapons and electronic controlled weapons that the employee is authorized to use at least annually.

D. Meet and maintain all requirements set forth by the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commission.

E. Except when authorized in writing by the Sheriff or Undersheriff, deputies are prohibited from carrying or using in an official capacity any weapon or ammunition that has been altered, tampered with, or whose construction or mechanical condition has been changed from the original manufacturer's specifications.

VI. Lead Firearms Instructor

The following requirements apply to the Lead Firearms Instructor appointed by the Office of the Sheriff.

A. Establish procedures for the inspection and approval of all firearms intended for use in the performance of duty, and a process to remove unsafe firearms.

B. In conjunction with the Quartermaster, maintain a record on each firearm approved by the Office of the Sheriff for official use.

C. Ensure that all firearms proficiency training is approved by the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commission, and conducted by a Maryland certified firearms instructor.

D. Document all firearms training and proficiency results. A 70% proficiency rating is required to carry a firearm.

E. Provide mandatory remedial training for those deputies who are unable to qualify with an authorized firearm, before they resume official duties. Immediate in-house instruction will be offered to correct observed deficiencies. If a deputy does not achieve a 70% score after three attempts, they will be unable to carry a firearm. COMAR standards for the State of Maryland allow 30 days to requalify.

F. Ensure that all employees authorized to carry lethal and/or less lethal weapons are issued copies of and instructed in Office of the Sheriff Policies and Directives relating to the use of force, before being authorized to carry them, and that such instruction and issuance is documented.

G. Ensure that all employees authorized to carry lethal and/or less lethal weapons are issued copies of and instructed in Office of the Sheriff Policies and Directives on their use, before being authorized to carry them, and that such instruction and issuance is documented.

VII. Safety, Maintenance, and Repairs

A. Deputies will maintain all firearms and ammunition in a clean and operable condition at all times.

B. When not in use, firearms will be kept in a secure and locked location, inaccessible to all persons who are not sworn members of the Office of the Sheriff.

C. Except during emergencies and formal training, firearms will only be loaded or unloaded at a safe location, utilizing a loading/unloading canister where available.

D. Deputies will obey all orders issued by a Maryland certified firearms instructor while at any approved firing range.

E. Firearms owned by the Office of the Sheriff needing repairs and/or adjustments will be forwarded promptly to the Lead Firearms Instructor, who will issue a replacement firearm until the original firearm is returned to the assigned deputy. Personal firearms that have been approved for on duty use that are found to need repairs and/or adjustments will be removed from service and returned to their owner for correction.

F. All repairs and/or adjustments to firearms will be conducted by a certified firearms armorer approved by the Lead Firearms Instructor, who will document and maintain a maintenance log for each firearm.

G. All firearms under the control of the Lead Firearms Instructor will be inspected and approved by the Lead Firearms Instructor prior to the firearm being issued for service.

H. All personnel including all instructors present at a practice firing range shall wear a ballistic protective vest during any type of live firearms practice/training/qualifications. Ballistic vests may be removed during certain circumstances when live fire has ceased at a range like meal-time, range clean-up, etc. Vests may also be removed for indoor classroom instruction time.

VIII. Inspections

Supervisors will personally inspect their subordinates' issued firearms, ammunition, and authorized personal firearms that are carried while on duty and document their findings on all regularly required inspection reports.

A. Before each inspection, all firearms will be unloaded and cleared at a safe location, utilizing a loading/unloading canister if available. Magazines and loose rounds will be secured separately while the firearms are being inspected. The firearms will be disassembled into two components; (1) the frame and (2) the slide with recoil spring guide and spring intact.

B. Supervisors will inspect all firearms, ammunition, and magazines, noting the type and condition of each.

C. After inspection supervisors will ensure that all deputies return to a safe location, utilizing a loading/unloading canister if available, and reload their firearms before resuming their respective duties.

D. Violations of any firearms and/or ammunition regulations discovered during inspection will be corrected immediately and documented. The supervisor may exercise his/her discretion as to the form of documentation, taking into consideration the severity of the violation and whether it appeared to be intentional or not.

IX. CALEA References: 1.3.9a, 1.3.9b, 1.3.9c, 1.3.9d, 1.3.9e, 1.3.9f, 1.3.10, 1.3.11, 1.3.12, 33.1.5 & 33.1.6.

X. Proponent Unit: Support Services

XI. Cancellation: This directive cancels Index Code 402 dated 10/01/02, revised 12/11/17, and Memorandum 12-08 dated 10/11/12.

Sheriff Gary Hofmann