



**STATE SAFETY OFFICE**  
HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK ARMY NATIONAL GUARD  
330 OLD NISKAYUNA ROAD  
LATHAM, NEW YORK 12110



## **SAFETY MESSAGE 20-05**

### **May is Small Arms Safety**

#### **Small Arms Safety**

Topping the list of small arms safety issues are improper handling and malfunctions due to improper headspace and timing or maintenance, which are often a result of complacency, indiscipline and inadequate training. The constant exposure to weapons in a deployed environment versus garrison increases the potential for Soldiers to become complacent and provides greater opportunities for unintentional discharges to occur.

#### **Unintentional discharges most commonly occur when:**

- Cleaning, clearing or performing a functions check.
- Entering or exiting vehicles.
- Retrieving, uploading, or emplacing weapons
- Following a change of mission, duty, or weapon's status.
- Joking or playing around pointing a weapon at themselves or someone else.
- Handling a foreign weapon they are unfamiliar with.
- Becoming distracted and fiddling with a weapon and un mindfully pulling the trigger.

While not as prevalent, improper headspace and timing and accidental ricochet/shrapnel incidents are also a concern. As with unintentional discharges, these mishaps are often a result of inadequate training, overconfidence, complacency, and indiscipline.

#### **Steps to reduce weapons handling risk:**

- Assist Leaders in ensuring personnel have adequate training for their assigned weapons. Do not allow personnel to use weapons they have not been trained on or that have not been inspected for serviceability.
- As one of the first steps in clearing a weapon, ensure personnel remove the source of ammunition (magazine, belt, etc.). Do not allow personnel to clean weapons with a magazine in the weapon.
- Ensure there is adequate command policy in place regarding authorized holsters. Avoid holsters that orient muzzles towards personnel.
- Ensure there is adequate policy regarding handling and use of foreign weapons and ammunition.
- Ensure Soldiers use the proper gauge. The M2 and M3 are not interchangeable.
- Remind Soldiers when firing an individual weapon from the gunner's station to ensure the muzzle has cleared the turret. A good way to do this is to have them put the barrel over the turret.
- Partner with unit leaders to aggressively change the way Soldiers THINK about weapons safety!

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.

## References and Links

- AR 385-63: Range Safety  
<http://www.apd.army.mil/>
- DA PAM 385-63 Range Safety  
<http://www.apd.army.mil/>

To find previously published Safety Messages go to our NYARNG Safety Website:

<http://dmna.ny.gov/safety/>

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