

UAF Policy 02.09.020
Original Adoption: May 1, 2018
Updated: October 9, 2018

Field Firearms Policy

Responsible Chancellor's Cabinet Members: Vice Chancellor for Research; Provost; Vice Chancellor for Rural, Community and Native Education; Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs; Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services.

Responsible Department/Office: Research Institutes and Academic Units that sponsor field research or courses; Environmental Health, Safety, & Risk Management; Police Department.

POLICY STATEMENT

Ensuring the safety of employees and students must be a top priority. Improper or unskilled use of a firearm could pose a serious risk to people. The purpose of this document is to mitigate unintended risk by providing a UAF policy, consistent with University of Alaska Board of Regents' Policy and University Regulation, regarding the use of firearms during field courses or sanctioned field research activities.

BACKGROUND & JUSTIFICATION

Board of Regents' Policy 02.09.020 - Possession of Weapons, provides that "...possession or carrying of firearms in buildings or parts of buildings owned or controlled by the university, on developed university land adjacent to university buildings, or at university sporting, entertainment or educational events, is a violation of regents' policy and may result in administrative sanctions." UAF field courses and field research are university educational events governed by this policy. However, the president has authority to and has provided for exceptions in University Regulation.

University Regulation 02.09.020.B provides for chancellor approval of exceptions: "activities involving firearms...may be carried on at the university only under supervised educational, recreational, professional or research programs where such activities are expressly authorized in advance by the appropriate chancellor or chancellor's designee."

In the field, the use of firearms is occasionally necessary to ensure the safety of personnel, primarily as defense against bears. This policy applies to all university-sponsored field courses and university-sponsored research activities as defined below. This policy establishes the minimum requirements for chancellor approval of firearms during field activities. Specific research or academic units may have more restrictive policies in place, including banning possession of all firearms.

DEFINITIONS

Base camp: The main encampment containing shelter and supplies for those involved in the larger field activities.

EHSRM: Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management

Field: The location of any university-related activities, including course or research activities, that occur beyond the UAF campus. "Field" does not include off-campus: sporting events, meetings, conferences, trainings, sponsored dinners, or events that occur at another institution, facility, or field site not under the administrative control of UAF.

Firearm: A legal rifle, pistol, or shotgun in proper working order that is appropriate for bear protection (e.g., .30-06 rifle, 44 Magnum pistol, 12 gauge shotgun).

Individual associated with a UAF field activity: Anyone so-designated by the supervisor of the activity. This includes, but is not limited to, students, faculty, or staff from other universities who participate in UAF field research, sharing campsites or transportation with UAF employees and students in remote areas.

Supervisor: The course instructor, lead supervisor, principal investigator, research project coordinator, or field safety officer, as appropriate.

REFERENCES RELIED UPON

Board of Regents' Policy 02.09.020 - Possession of Weapons, and University Regulation 02.09.020 - Possession of Weapons.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All UAF faculty, staff and students and all individuals associated with a UAF field activity are responsible for following the policy.

The responsibility for enforcing the provisions of this policy lies with the dean or director of the specific unit that is sponsoring the pertinent field course or field research activity, or that is storing university-owned firearms.

PROCEDURES

1. Approval Process

In order to possess or use a firearm in the field, the following steps must be taken:

- a. The applicant submits a request to the supervisor, including the make and model of the firearm, the ammunition being taken to the field, and the rationale for possession of the firearm.
- b. Applications should be made at least 60 days in advance of the field activity to assure that the approval process can be completed. Applicants should be aware that the required training can be difficult to obtain on short notice.

Every reasonable effort will be made to expedite applications in emergencies, e.g., changes in field personnel due to injuries.

- c. Applicants should be aware that if their request is for a firearm to protect against bears, the make, model, and ammunition must be suitable for that purpose and that applications for unsuitable firearms and ammunition will not be approved.
- d. The supervisor collates all requests for a specific field activity, or series of related field activities using the Firearms Applicant Form and submits the supervisor-approved requests to the dean/director along with the basis for approval of specific firearms indicated. The supervisor is responsible for collecting copies of proof of training (as described in (2) below) and ensuring that the specified firearm is appropriate for the use situation. The supervisor is responsible for informing all individuals involved as to the number of firearms that will be present for a specific field activity, and for communicating other firearm safety protocols as outlined in (4) below. The supervisor should inform any applicants whose applications were denied and provide the rationale. Applicants who are denied by the supervisor may appeal to the dean/director.
- e. If approved, the dean/director submits the request/s to EH SRM. The dean/director should inform any applicants whose applications were denied and provide the rationale. The decision of the dean/director is final.
- f. EH SRM may request more information from the dean/director. Once approved, EH SRM submits the request/s to the chancellor or chancellor's designee for final approval. The chancellor or designee should inform any applicants whose applications were denied and provide the rationale.
- g. Individual approvals for UAF faculty, staff, and graduate students are valid for three calendar years from the date of approval by the chancellor or designee, provided that the individual continues to engage in field activities consistent with the rationale submitted in the original application.
 - If there is a change in the firearm or a material modification to the field activity during the 3 year period, a description of the change shall be submitted to the supervisor, dean/director/EH SRM, and chancellor or designee.
 - If the formerly approved individual becomes unable to legally possess a firearm, their UAF approval is immediately null and void. The individual shall notify the supervisor of the change in legal status, and the supervisor shall notify the dean or director, who shall notify the chancellor or designee.

- Individuals may request a renewal of the 3-year approval. The supervisor may require the applicant to retake required training upon review of the request.
- h. Individual approvals for undergraduate students, and for individuals associated with UAF research projects who are neither UAF employees nor students, are valid only for the specific activities described in the application and expire after one calendar year. Even if the activity continues, undergraduate students and individuals associated with UAF research projects who are neither UAF employees nor students must reapply each year.
- i. If the formerly approved individual becomes unable to legally possess a firearm, their UAF approval is immediately null and void. The individual shall notify his supervisor of the change in legal status, and the supervisor shall notify the dean or director, who shall notify the chancellor or designee.

2. Required Training

For safety purposes, any individual applying for the use of a firearm in the field must be trained in its use. The applicant also must be legally able to possess a firearm.

- a. The applicant must complete an approved firearm safety training course and provide documentation of this completion. Accepted trainings include:
- UAF firearms training overseen by EHSRM. This UAF training is recommended if available.
- OR
- Training course completion for the firearm taken in the field from a national or state certified firearms training organization (ADF&G, NRA, etc).
- OR
- Course Approved by EHSRM with the following components:
 - CLASSROOM
 - Firearms Safety Rules
 - Firearms Operation and Safe Handling
 - Firearms Transportation and Storage
 - Firearms Laws (State and Federal)

- RANGE
 - Must include live fire firearm practice (rifle/pistol/shotgun) using the firearm taken into the field
- TIME
 - Four hour minimum
- INSTRUCTOR
 - Must be taught by an instructor with firearm training certification from an approved organization, e.g., ADF&G, MAA (NRA Certified Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun Instructor)

OR

- Higher levels of training approved by EHSRM.
 - For example, certification as a firearms safety instructor.
- b. Applicants are responsible for their own training, unless ability to possess or use a firearm is required by the supervisor for the activity. In that case, the necessary training will be provided. Activity supervisors may request funding for training from their dean or director if grant funding is not available to cover the cost. The applicant must self-declare that the applicant:
 - May legally possess a firearm and that the firearm is in proper working order;
 - Understands that possession of a firearm while impaired by drugs or alcohol is a Class A misdemeanor under Alaska law (AS 11.61.210(a)(1), agree that they will not possess a firearm while impaired, and know that such possession will be grounds for immediate removal from camp and disciplinary action.

3. Transport, Storage, and Maintenance

- a. Approved field weapons may only be present on campus outside of secure storage for purposes of transport directly to or from authorized activities or return to secure storage.
- b. Firearms must be unloaded and both firearms and ammunition must be placed in a secure carry case(s) for transport to and from field locations where their use may be necessary.

- c. At the field site, when not in use, firearms must be secured. Depending on the need for accessibility of the firearm, a trigger lock may be required. The supervisor determines the protocol for the specific activity.
- d. UAF owned firearms must be cleaned before being returned to UAF storage facilities, even if they have not been used. Any known problems with condition or operation must be reported to the supervisor of the unit that owns the firearm.
- e. Deans/Directors are responsible for ensuring field weapons are securely stored on campus or at authorized off-campus facilities when not in use. Field weapons may be securely stored with the police department in its central weapons storeroom. Deans/Directors must have written approval of the chancellor for alternate storage arrangements on campus, or at off-campus facilities where weapons are authorized.

4. Communicating Firearm Safety Protocols

At the beginning of a field activity, the supervisor will communicate the following items to the field crew:

- a. Who has a firearm, its make and model.
- b. How firearms are being transported.
- c. Where in base camp firearms are being stored.
- d. What the procedures are for firearm use.
- e. Who is authorized to use the firearm.
- f. When access to firearms is not permitted, (e.g., when under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants).
- g. Participants will be assured access to communication devices to allow the private reporting of firearm safety concerns.

5. Discharging a Firearm in the Field

The discharging of a firearm, for any reason, must be reported by the supervisor in writing to the appropriate dean/director as soon as practically possible. Target practice at official shooting ranges is excluded from this requirement.

NON-COMPLIANCE

Failure to comply with this policy may be grounds for disciplinary action by the university.

EXCEPTIONS

Museum research program (for use of firearms in collecting samples) may be exempted if they are covered under a separate firearm policy. Other exceptions to this policy may only be granted by the Chancellor or designee.

The Chancellor has granted an exception to the *R/V Sikuliaq*, which has its own policies for the safe storage and use of firearms.

POLICY APPROVED BY:



Daniel M. White, Chancellor
University of Alaska Fairbanks

October 9, 2018
Date