

# Reenactors of the American Civil War

These Safety Rules are reprinted here from the RACW Policies and Procedures Manual. You can find the entire document on the RACW web site. (Revised and Updated as of 03/08)

## Article III - Safety Rules

All members of the RACW will be expected to read and be familiar with these rules before engaging in any event or activity. Any member violating these safety rules and regulations is subject to disciplinary action and or court martial.

### **Section 1 - General Safety**

1. Smoking or open flame is prohibited during the following times: - While handling powder in any form (safety distance 30 feet for loading) - After muster for battle has been called - During battles - After battles until all weapons and cartridges have been secured.
2. To avoid unnecessary conflict, at no time will a member pick up another members weapon without permission from such member. The exception is when the member retrieving the weapon has good faith and reasonable belief that the owner has "lost" the weapon. For purposes of interpreting this rule, cannon implements are weapons.
3. Hazardous conduct on the field such as "horseplay" is prohibited.
4. Firearms and powder supplies will never be out of possession, sight or control. To prevent access before, during and after battles or demonstrations, firearms, ammunition, caps and powder supplies will be guarded to prevent theft, unauthorized tampering, personal injury and/or damage to the explosives. No loaded weapons, caps, ammunition or powder will ever be put into the hands of spectators, minors or noncombatants. The individual gun or powder owner will be held responsible.
5. Spectators will only handle weapons in controlled, demonstration scenarios. The weapon being demonstrated is never to leave the sight of its owner. Weapons will only be handled by minors with the parent's approval and only when parent or guardian is present. Handling of weapons by spectators or noncombatant minors for any reason other than that described above is strictly prohibited.
6. During battlefield activities, any member, observing a situation that is in violation of a safety rule, may be allowed to correct the situation immediately, otherwise, if not resolved, may call a cease fire, which shall remain in effect until the situation is corrected or resolved.
7. Canteens are required for all those participating in battlefield activities unless the weather proves cool enough to permit otherwise. Discretion is left to unit officers.
8. All weapons will be inspected each day prior to battle. Any weapon found to be unserviceable (i.e. no half cock, etc) will be banned from the field. Any weapon found to be rusty or fouled will be cleaned and re-inspected before use.
9. All weapons must be clean and in good repair prior to use.
10. The possession of live ammunition, either period or modern and/or the possession of modern weapons in camp are prohibited.

### **Section 2 - Battlefield Safety**

1. Gunfire is prohibited: - In any area where powder is being handled or exposed for the purposes of loading cartridges. - Within 50 feet of any artillery ammunition box or powder magazine. - In camp or other tented areas unless otherwise specified.
2. Weapon firing or clearing of guns outside of the battlefield must be authorized by your sergeant or Commanding Officer. Prior to clearing weapon, make sure you have a 25 foot safety distance from any spectator and give the alarm "fire in the hole". Indiscriminate firing of weapons is not permitted.
3. A wounded party may never fire from the ground. A soldier should discharge his weapon before falling.
4. Soldiers may fire from the prone position only when commanded to by their Commanding Officer. Before firing the soldier will elevate his muzzle above any tall grass, sand or loose rocks.
5. The minimum distance for aimed long arm fire is 30 feet, and is 30 feet when firing at an approaching horseman.
6. Hand to hand combat is not allowed unless pre-approved by both commanding officers (U.S. and C.S.). Before engaging in any hand to hand all weapons must be cleared and empty. Individuals who find themselves in unauthorized hand-to-hand combat will surrender, take a hit or run away, as appropriate. After the battle the individual instigating the unauthorized hand to hand will be reported to Brigade command.
7. All fighting will end when "recall" is sounded.
8. Each company commander shall be responsible for ensuring that each member in his command is competent in his/her familiarity with the Safety Rules of the RACW to allow that member to participate on the battlefield. If the company commander does not feel the member is sufficiently well versed with the safety rules, the company commander has the obligation and authority, under these bylaws, to prevent said member from participating in the battle line.
9. Civilian Corps members are not allowed on the active battlefield with the exception of scripted scenarios that have been

approved by both brigade commanders and civilian leader.

10. When necessary, civilians may be posted for crowd control under command of provost officers.

### **Section 3 - Long arm Safety**

1. All weapons will be field cleaned at the end of the day.
2. Weapons will be loaded only when designated by your Commanding Officer.
3. Only FF or FFF grade black powder will be used (absolutely no black powder substitutes are allowed).
4. At no time will ramrods be drawn on the field.
5. Long arm cartridges must be made of paper without tape, staples or glue in a manner that conforms to the civil war period. They will be made prior to battle and will contain no more than 75 grains of black powder. (Shotguns may use 130 grains) Powder horns are not allowed on the battlefield.
6. When loading, only the powder will be placed in the barrel, no paper. Exception is when specially treated silver nitrate paper is used for breech-loading carbines.
7. When discharging a weapon inside the minimum safety distance, the weapon will be discharged straight up at a right angle to the ground.

### **Section 4 - Pistol Safety**

1. Revolvers and other pistols will be inspected prior to loading in order to determine whether the weapon can be safe to operate on the field.
2. Revolvers and other pistols will use 35 grains of FFF powder only.
3. Single shot pistols may be loaded with 40 grains and will be treated as long arms in other respects.
4. Only dry material of the following can be utilized as wadding for pistols and revolvers: cream of wheat, cream of rice, corn meal, Farina, Flora foam, or Malt-o-Meal. All other wadding is prohibited.
5. Pistols shall be loaded and re-inspected prior to battle.
6. All pistols are to be carried in a holster when loaded. Carrying pistols in waistbands or belts is prohibited.
7. Reenactors using revolvers may carry extra cylinders provided the cylinders are fully loaded, capped and securely carried in a leather pouch designed specifically for this function.
8. Minimum distance for aimed pistol fire is 30 feet.

### **Section 5 - Bladed Weapons**

1. Bayonets will be fixed only at the order of the field commanders (except for public demonstration). Metal bayonets will never be drawn on the battlefield.
2. Knives shall not be drawn on the field and will be tied or otherwise secured to their sheaths.
3. Swords shall be drawn only by field commanders and at the direction of the senior commander of each side.
4. Rubber bayonets and approved rubber knives may be used in choreographed hand-to-hand scenarios.

### **Section 6 - Artillery Safety**

1. Muzzle loading artillery pieces are to be manned by at least three men who have been trained in the proper operation of the gun which they are operating.
2. All artillery shall have the proper equipment and be in good repair. Determination of suitability shall be the responsibility of the senior artillery officer. The senior artillery officer must approve artillery before being placed on the field.
3. No object or material may be fired from a gun if it will travel beyond the safety zone.
4. Artillery munitions boxes will be at least 25 feet to the rear of the cannon and 30 feet from the nearest public.
5. The munitions box containing black powder shall be constantly manned when unlocked. When not in use the box is to be stored in a safe and secured area keeping with all governmental regulations governing black powder storage.
6. The munitions box lid is to remain closed when rounds are not being moved, loaded or inspected.
7. The placement of the artillery is the responsibility of the senior artillery officer.
8. The safety zone for artillery will be 50 feet to the sides and rear and 75 feet to the front. Only artillery crews or authorized personnel are allowed within the safety area when the gun is loaded or the munitions box is opened.
9. No gun shall be loaded when the safety zones are not clear. No gun shall be fired when the frontal safety zone is not clear.
10. All artillery rounds shall be made of black powder.
11. Cannon rounds will not be composed of more than 8 ounces of powder per inch of bore diameter of the gun in which that round will be used, or follow manufacturer's recommendations.
12. The senior artillery officer of each Brigade shall submit to the Board an outline of necessary equipment and firing procedures for each gun in his battery.
13. If an artillery piece is loaded, the number one man will place the rammer in a vertical position on top of the right gun wheel. For breech loading guns the number 1 man will hold his right hand in the air.

### **Section 7 - Horse Safety**

1. There will be no attacks or other movements within 30 feet of tented areas.
2. Attacking horsemen must not close to less than 60 feet and honor the safety zone of artillery batteries when the cannons are

loaded.

3. Anyone using a horse will be tested by the senior mounted cavalryman of each side or their designee for their riding ability. This also applies to nonmilitary personnel.
4. All horses must be tested with firearms and cannon.
5. All tack and shoes will be inspected for serviceability.
6. Horses may only be touched or handled by the owner or by a person designated by the owner.
7. Any person riding or handling a horse at any event must be an RACW member.
8. There will be no fighting within 75 yards of picketing areas when in use.
9. The senior horseman of each side will be responsible for the placement of horse picketing areas.
10. The picket line shall be kept taut and horses will be securely tied to the picket line.
11. Guards will be posted to watch the horses night and day.
12. At no time will horses be intentionally spooked or stampeded.

## **Section 8 - Spectator Safety**

1. At no time shall any weapon be pointed at a spectator.
2. No weapon will be fired within 25 feet of a spectator.
3. If, at any time, a spectator enters the battle area a cease-fire will be called by any member observing the action. The cease-fire will be maintained until the spectator is removed from the battlefield.
4. Individuals assigned to provost have absolute authority to call cease-fire and redirect soldiers or units that are positioned too close to the crowd.
5. The host event site and/or Board shall be responsible for the placement of spectator viewing areas. These shall be patrolled by readily visible "guards" to keep the public in proper place while battlefield operations are going on.
6. All safety members assigned to safety activities involving spectators and guests will use utmost courtesy when requesting that spectators or guests relocate to a designated spectator area. Any abusive attitude or language is prohibited.
7. The provost will have the battlefield cleared of spectators a minimum of 10 minutes before a battle.
8. The Safety Committee shall consist of the provost marshal of each Brigade and a representative from the Noncombatant Corps. This committee shall coordinate all safety guard responsibilities.
9. The Program Announcer, if any present, shall remind spectators of safety precautions before each battle.

## **Section 9 – Ground Charge Procedures**

1. Ground charges shall be marked by a white chalk or flour circle, red flags or new straw and marked with a further 10-foot diameter circle of the same. Only ground charge technicians are to enter the 10-foot safety zones around ground charges.
2. Ground charges will not be of greater than four (4) ounces of black powder with a recommended charge of two (2) ounces, and shall be placed only in containers designed to withstand repeated detonation of such a charge. Materials used must meet with Board approval before added to the mixture, such as peat moss.
3. Ground charges shall only be used in scenarios where placement and safety of charges have been reviewed by the senior technician and the senior artillery officers and the commanders of both armies and senior safety personnel have been briefed as to charge location and use scenarios.
4. Ground charges must be electrically activated only and so wired and packed as to prevent discharge by any other means.
5. The ground charge control box will be inactive and shall not be handled when placing charges.
6. Only technicians authorized by both brigade commanders and a Board member shall handle ground charges, wiring or control boxes, whether such items are active or inactive at the time.
7. No tripping of ground charges by foot controls. Only by control box with an approved technician in attendance at all times during the planned battle scenario where they are used.
8. The brigade commanders of both armies along with the senior technician shall submit to the Board necessary equipment and loading procedures for ground charges.

## **Section 10 - Implementation of PACWR safety testing**

1. Commencing with the 2008 season all RACW member shall pass with a 100% score the general PACWR safety test and the specific PACWR safety test for their branch of service or any weapon their use. (The PACWR Safety Rules are printed separately and available on the RACW web page.)
2. Unit commanders are responsible for administering the tests in writing. The test may be administered "open book" and with the assistance of mentors. The answer sheets, endorsed with the signature of the unit commander or designee, shall be provided to and retained by the Secretary for a period five (5) years.
3. No membership card shall be issued to any member until the safety test is received by the Secretary. The membership card should reflect all such tests passed. The Secretary is authorized discretion to accept the written representation of the unit commanders on the results of the safety tests pending receipt of the hard copy.