



Health and Safety on Shooting Ranges During COVID-19 Era

More than half of the 220 Izaak Walton League chapters have a variety of shooting ranges and many of their members and the public enjoy using these facilities to practice their sport and learn to shoot safely and responsibly.

As coronavirus restrictions on public gatherings are eased and “stay-at-home” orders are lifted, more members are returning to chapters and wanting to pursue their favorite outdoor pastime. It is also likely that chapters will begin hosting public events associated with shooting sports.

Times have changed on how you maintain and operate shooting ranges, as well as how we conduct ourselves on a range during the COVID-19 era. You’ll need to use a commonsense approach, become more creative about managing range use, and pay much more attention to health and safety details when re-opening and operating ranges.

Success is achievable by adhering to current hygiene guidelines issued by local and state governments. However, you’ll have to move beyond merely requiring face coverings, limiting group sizes, and promoting social distancing.

Social Distancing

You can reduce the potential of person-to-person spread of coronavirus by:

- Minimizing crowd size at any one time, whether on the rifle-pistol range and an archery course or shooting trap or skeet.
- Keeping social distancing practices in minds, limit the number of shooting benches and pistol lanes and shotgunning positions available for use.

- Establishing a reservation system in order to stagger access to the range and start times.
- Spacing out shooters on the firing line and in staging areas and instructional classrooms.

Keep It Clean

You can further protect range users by:

- Ensuring that shooters and member volunteers, such as range safety officers (RSO), use personal protective equipment, including masks or face coverings.
- Keeping people safe, not only with required eye and ear protection, but by having a supply of hand sanitizer, disposable gloves, and face masks available.
- Using disinfectant wipes to clean shared firearms, bows, and other equipment as well as hard surfaces that are touched frequently.
- Keeping a supply of cleaning solution visible for all to see and making it available for regular use. For example, every time a shooter leaves a shooting bench sanitizing it is in order.
- Covering shooting benches and pistol tables with a layer of heavy-ply plastic for ease of cleaning – regardless if it has wood, concrete, or metal surface. Clean and disinfect frequently these surfaces.
- Maintaining adequate trash cans for disposing used gloves and disinfectant wipes and emptying the waste contents often.
- Allowing only a volunteer to pick up the spent brass and empty shotgun shells off the trap, skeet, and sporting clays courses while wearing gloves and thoroughly washing their hands afterwards.

Other Hygiene Tips

- While monitoring the firing line, an RSO and firearms instructor will need to maintain safe distancing and reduce their hands-on contact with shooters whenever possible.
- Consider installing sneeze guard barriers (i.e., plexi-glass) between shooting benches, especially between pistol shooter positions, and in front of registration and sales counters.
- Limit access to restrooms and keep them clean and disinfected often.
- While all ranges should prohibit smoking, consider prohibiting use of smokeless tobacco, thus eliminating spitting.
- Close off water fountains and encourage range users to bring their own water.
- If a sign-in sheet is required, have several ink pens that are kept wiped with a disinfectant solution after use.
- Clean loaner equipment such as a shooting sleds, spotting scopes, sandbags, and staplers after use.

Communications

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of clear communications to your members and their guests about abiding by health and safety measures:

- Keep your members and the public informed by promoting these health and safety practices using the chapter's newsletter, social media, and website.
- Communicate your range user hygiene and safety rules with reminder posters and warning signs posted, located not just at the ranges, but, throughout the chapter grounds and in the chapterhouse.

The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) offers a series of free COVID-19 safety posters that are available to League chapters (https://nssf.force.com/CPBase_store?site=a0d1500000BFszkAAD).

- Review these practices during shooter orientation and by having RSOs remind those on the firing line. While wearing face covering, remember to speak up when giving instructions and voice commands.

Liability

Regardless if its shooting ranges, fishing ponds, campsites or hiking trails, chapters that offer members and the public access to outdoor recreation facilities should require a signed liability release form. Consider:

- Amending your existing form to include a reference, warning and acknowledgment of potential exposure to COVID-19 while engaging in activities at the chapter.
- Contacting your chapter's insurance agent to review your liability insurance policy.
- Being aware of a member's vulnerability such as older age, pre-existing conditions and current health issues. If this person is serving as an RSO or other range volunteer, and is feeling ill, have them stay home.
- Actively enforcing your range and health and safety rules.

Another Resource

The NSSF has been compiling strategies and tactics that shooting ranges can safely re-open and operate. "The Outdoor Range Models of Success During the COVID-19 Era" webinar is available for your viewing on their educational forum, SHOT University Online. To view this recorded session, check out: <https://www.pathlms.com/nssf/courses/>.

As you work to responsibly re-open your shooting ranges and welcome back shooting sports enthusiasts, review and use these health and safety strategies to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and you'll bring success to your chapter.

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