

## Muzzle Awareness

Part 1 in a multiple part series on the Safe and Proper use of your defensive tool

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The cornerstone of all firearms training, no matter the context is safety. All Americans who exercise their 2A Rights must also exercise them responsibly; this begins with safe gun handling.

Many training organizations have various "Safety Rules" that if followed will prevent someone hurting themselves or someone else. A firearm is like a hammer or a chainsaw, it, on it's own, is incapable of inflicting harm. However, just like a hammer or a chainsaw, in the hands of a person who is ignorant, physically incapable, undisciplined, or criminally inclined, then that PERSON has the potential to pose danger to themselves or those around them.

Although it is good to know the parts and nomenclature and basic operations of your firearm, you don't have to be a junior gunsmith to be able to handle a gun safely. The 2 most important "gun parts" to know is the muzzle and the trigger. This article I will discuss the Muzzle and Muzzle Awareness.

Keep in mind, that no matter the type, make, model, shape or size all guns are going to have a muzzle. The muzzle is the hole at the end of the barrel of the gun where the projectile(s) exit at a high velocity. All of the national training organizations have a safety rule to address this:

NRA: ALWAYS keep the gun pointed in a safe direction (This is NRA's golden rule)

USCCA: Do not point the gun at something that you are not willing to destroy

I.C.E. Training: Keep the gun pointed in a generally safe direction whenever possible

We must have an "awareness" of our muzzle and be disciplined to control that muzzle when we are handling the gun. Handling means anytime our grubby paws interface with the gun; shooting it, admiring it, passing it to a friend, putting it into a holster, taking it out of a holster, cleaning it, taking a selfie with it, etc..... ANYTIME and EVERYTIME.... Even if we are defending our self against an attacker, we must be aware of our muzzle and what it is pointing at. It should be pointed in that generally safe direction whenever possible.

What constitutes a safe direction?

A safe direction is where there aren't any people and if the gun were fired the projectile would remain in the "area". This is relatively easy at the range. So long as there aren't any people in front of the firing line, downrange towards the backstop is most often a safe direction and if a round was fired it would land safely in the backstop. However, outside of controlled shooting environments, safe directions can change with every step. In the woods of Pennsylvania, for example, down at the ground is most often times a safe direction; unless our foot is between the muzzle and the ground... then it is no longer a safe direction. Get the point? If you are amongst a group of people Up MAY be a safe option, however, if a round were to go off where would the bullet ultimately land? An errant round into the sky can potentially hit a bystander miles away. An incident just like this struck an unsuspecting citizen multiple miles away and almost closed down a local sportsmen club some years ago. We must have a solid backstop to capture any round we

fire. There is an old adage that every bullet that leaves your gun has a lawyer attached to it. There may be wisdom in that statement.

Another rule, "Know your target and what is beyond/around it" is a very important rule that can be considered with muzzle discipline and the safe direction concept. As hunter shooting related incidents in the woods are becoming more rare, when they do happen it is often time when folks are mistaken for game or when someone was in the line of fire. Remember that even in a dynamic critical incident if you are defending yourself against an attacker, if you engage the bad guy and there are good folks behind them you must do your best to change your angle so that if you miss or the round over penetrates then you don't unintentionally harm an innocent bystanders or a loved one. Unfortunately this is a lot to consider when seconds count during an attack that we didn't start and could not get away from, but it is part of our duty as responsible gun owners to consider it. This should further emphasize the importance of training. Remember, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment has 2 components: Armed and Well Regulated. Seek out training, learn to run your gun efficiently and intuitively.

Lastly, as I wrap up this installment, consider one more rule, "The Big Picture Rule". Every time you pick up your gun, consider this:

Recognize that YOU are in control of a firearm, if YOU use this firearm carelessly, ignorantly, or with malice, YOU have the potential to harm or kill yourself or someone else.

Act accordingly. Don't just be an armed American, be a responsibly armed American!

Stay armed, alert, safe, and be well regulated!