

## **Historic Black Powder Weapons Safety Regulations**

By their nature, any time weapons are used – with or without black powder – there is an increased risk of injury. Park staff and living historians are acutely aware of this and share both the concern and the responsibility for safe practices. Many living history groups hold their members to high safety standards and the NPS depends upon a strong, consistently demonstrated commitment to safety for any person or group involved in a park event. Ultimately, though, it is the National Park Service that is responsible for the safety of an event.

All firing demonstrations will be done according to National Park Service black powder safety regulations, under the direct supervision of a certified NPS Black Powder Safety Officer who will have the final say on the conduct of all historic weapons firing demonstrations. Safety is our primary concern, and our common goal.

Before a participating in a living history event involving historic black powder weapons at San Juan NHS, each unit commander must sign a Historic Weapons Firing Permit. This permit must be signed by the unit commander and returned to the Historic Weapons Supervisor by e-mail or fax two weeks prior to the event.

### **Acceptable Weapon Types**

Only reproduction firearms may be used at the park. **THE USE OF ORIGINAL FIREARMS IS PROHIBITED.**

Reproduction small arms that **will** be allowed are:

- Early to mid-18th century flintlock muskets, fusils, or fowling pieces.
- British Long Land Pattern
- British Short Land Pattern
- French Charleville

Reproduction small arms that **will not** be allowed are:

- Pistols (may be carried by officers but may not be fired or brandished)
- Blunderbusses
- Percussion-cap weapons
- Bows & arrows

### **Weapon Safety, the Public, and You**

To ensure the safety of participants and our visitors, a high degree of firearm discipline is expected of each and every participant.

- All weapons will remain under physical control of its owner at all times.
- No weapon is to be left unattended.
- Visitors are not allowed to handle or touch a loaded weapon.
- Visitors may touch an unloaded weapon so long as the owner maintains physical control of it. **DO NOT HAND YOUR WEAPON TO VISITORS.**
- Participants under the age of 16 may not handle weapons (firearms or edged weapons).
- **NEVER** point your weapon (firearm or edged weapon) at anyone at anytime.

## **Appropriate Drill Manuals**

Appropriate drill manuals will be used by all participants handling/demonstrating historic weapons in the park. Acceptable manuals are:

- 1764 Manual Exercise
- Pickering's "Easy Plan of Discipline"
- Von Steuben's (not actually appropriate for 1775, but acceptable on grounds of safety)

## **Ammunition**

- All black powder brought into NPS areas by outside individuals or groups must be in the form of prepared cartridges and be under NPS control when not actually in use during a demonstration. Bulk or loose black powder is absolutely prohibited.
- Cartridge construction will be of sturdy paper only. Use of staples or tape is prohibited.
- Maximum charges are as follows: Muskets 125 grains FFG, Rifles 90 grains FFG
- The use of FFFG powder is prohibited.
- Unused cartridges will be collected after each demonstration.
- Powder contained in powder horns is strictly prohibited. Powder horns containing powder will be confiscated and secured by the NPS.
- Participants under age 16 may not handle powder.

## **Inspections**

- All small arms used in firing demonstrations will be inspected by the NPS once in the morning to ensure serviceability of the weapon, and then just prior to and immediately after every firing demonstration to ensure the weapon is clear.
- Weapons that pass the first morning inspection will be "tagged" by a small, unobtrusive piece of natural wool yarn (provided by the NPS).
- Weapons that fail inspection may not be carried. The owner must return the weapon to his/her vehicle or it will be secured by the NPS and returned at the end of the event.
- Weapons must meet the following standards to pass inspection
  1. secured flashguard and hammer stall
  2. no cracks or splits in the stock
  3. furniture and barrel fit securely to stock
  4. no missing stock pins or screws
  5. lock works smoothly
  6. half-cock position works properly
  7. flint is secured by leather or lead
  8. steel and spring are in good condition
  9. barrel free from visible dents or cracks
  10. no excessive rust or corrosion on the barrel, lock and touch hole
  11. no fouling in the barrel or on the lock

## **Firing Procedures**

- All firing demonstrations taking place on park property may only be done under the direct supervision of a certified NPS black powder safety officer.

- For protection from flash burns, all demonstrators firing black powder firearms will wear natural fiber, long-sleeved outer garments or full uniforms as appropriate to their historical impression.
- Range safety standards will be observed at all times. Firing will commence or cease at the discretion of the supervising NPS black powder safety officer.

## **Misfire Procedures**

### **Failure to spark:**

1. Call out “misfire” and hold the musket in the firing position for 10 seconds to make sure there is no hang fire.
2. Return to the priming position
3. Check priming and flint. Wipe down the steel. If working with the flint, attach the hammerstall and dump priming.
4. Re-prime if necessary
5. Return to the shoulder position and continue the firing procedure when ordered to do so by your company officer.

### **Flash in the pan:**

1. Call out “misfire” and hold the musket in the firing position for 10 seconds to make sure there is no hang fire.
2. Return to the priming position
3. Half-cock the piece, and reattach the hammerstall.
4. Pick out the touch-hole, wipe off the steel and flint and re-prime.
5. Return to the shoulder position and continue the firing procedure when ordered to do so by your company officer.

If, after following these procedures, the weapon still misses fire, you may retry three more times. If the weapon still will not fire, dump the charge and priming. The weapon is now out of the action. You may fall to the rear to assist officers in relaying messages etc.

## **Edged Weapons**

- Edged weapons (swords, bayonets, knives, hatchets, spontoons, halberds etc.) may be drawn and brandished in a safe and prudent manner, when the bearer and the weapon are behind a barrier in a secure area out of the reach of visitors, i.e. officers carrying swords during the tactical demonstration, or infantrymen in a bayonet demonstration).
- At no time may participants engage in simulated combat with real or simulated edged weapons.
- When not behind a barrier, out amongst visitors, swords, knives, bayonets and the like may not be fully drawn. They may be partially drawn enough to expose some of the blade for visual inspection for interpretive purposes, but no visitor may touch the blade.
- Soldiers on sentry duty may fix bayonets but must keep the musket in a vertical position and the bearer must maintain control of the weapon.
- At no time **may muskets be fired** with the bayonet fixed.

## Historic Black Powder Weapons Firing Permit

Before a unit can participate in a living history event involving historic black powder weapons at San Juan NHS, each unit commander must sign a Historic Weapons Firing Permit, which includes a copy of the Historic Black Powder Weapons Safety Regulations. This permit must be signed by the unit commander and returned to the event Black Powder Safety Officer by e-mail or fax no later than two weeks prior to the event.

E-mail: [jlgonzalez@nps.gov](mailto:jlgonzalez@nps.gov) or fax (787) 289-7973 the completed permit to:

Historic Weapons Supervisor  
San Juan National Historic Site  
501 Norzagaray St.  
San Juan, PR 00901  
c/o Leonor Perez

Unit Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Commander's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please tell us about your unit's drill, weaponry, and the kinds of historic weapons demonstration programs you like to do. Past demonstrations and in which park.

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In signing this permit, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the Historic Black Powder Weapons Safety Regulations and have communicated the same to all participating members of my unit and will comply with them fully.

Commander's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Historic  
Weapons Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_