

Use of firearms (rifles) at UNIS

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Introduction

UNIS uses firearms as part of our polar bear protection procedures. This document describes how UNIS rifles should be handled and used during fieldwork and private outings. Furthermore, the regulations describe both necessary requirements for access to UNIS rifles, and how to handle and store the rifle.

All UNIS rifles are “bolt action rifles” with the calibre .30-06. The use of other kinds of firearms for polar bear protection, such as shot guns, revolvers and pistols is, as a main rule, not allowed at UNIS. Exceptions from this rule might be granted in special situations where the participating personnel has got the necessary skills, and the nature of the fieldwork requires special, tailor-made solutions. All use of UNIS fire arms require safety training as described on page 5 in this document.

Breach of UNIS firearms safety regulations

A breach of UNIS firearms safety regulations is a violation of both internal UNIS safety regulations, local police regulations and Norwegian national weapon regulations.

Not following these regulations will result in serious sanctions from UNIS and could also constitute criminal liability.

The UNIS internal rifle regulations are founded on:

- The Norwegian Firearms Act dated 9 July 1961
- Norwegian Regulations on Firearms dated 25 June 2009
- Regulations from The Governor of Svalbard dated 12 October 2015

Definitions

Firearm (in this context): Rifle suited for big game hunting. UNIS uses bolt action rifles with the calibre .30-06.

Dummy ammunition: Cartridges that look like live ammunition, but is painted in red colour. The cartridges contain no powder and are not dangerous in any way. These are used to teach safe rifle handling.

Expanding ammunition (hunting ammunition): Ammunition with bullet weight of minimum 11.5 grams, expanding bullet and a minimum striking force at 2 700J measured at 100m.

Training ammunition: Ammunition used for training.

Half-loading the rifle: Filling the rifle magazine with ammunition while ensuring that the chamber is kept empty.

Emptying the rifle: Taking ammunition out of the magazine while ensuring that both the magazine and chamber are empty.

Signal pistol / flare gun: Handgun used for firing flares. Used as deterrent to scare of polar bears.

Access to firearms at UNIS

Formal requirements

Access to firearms at UNIS will require one of the two following:

- You need a valid weapon license stating that you are permitted to own a firearm.

Or

- You need a “certificate of good conduct” / “certificate of criminal record” from your local police authorities, stating that you are permitted to rent or buy a rifle. This certificate must be in a Scandinavian language or translated into English, and cannot be older than 6 months.

In addition to the documentation above you will need to have completed and passed the UNIS rifle safety training within the last 6 months.

Finally, you will have to demonstrate when collecting the rifle that you are able to handle the rifle correctly, by demonstrating half-loading and emptying the rifle.

Practical arrangements

When collecting a rifle through UNIS, you will have to fill out a rental registration form. This form is found online at www.unis.no/hse.

You also need to bring a copy of your weapon license or “certificate of good conduct” / “certificate of criminal record” as documentation. A copy of this certificate will be stored at UNIS together with a copy of the rental registration form.

You will need to carry the rental registration form with you at all times as long as you are carrying the rifle.

Safety regulations

Rifle safety on campus (in and around Forskningsparken / The Svalbard Science Centre)

Rifles must be kept empty when handled inside Longyearbyen, hence also on the campus area. The bolt shall be removed from the rifle, or positioned in the rear position to show that the rifle is empty. It is not allowed to perform any kind of rifle drill / practice on the campus area, even if the rifle is empty.

It is not allowed to bring rifles into the building, apart from the shortest way to the rifle storage rack at the Logistics department.

It is not allowed to store rifles in offices, classrooms, labs or other storage facilities.

Safety on the rifle range

- a. Never do anything with rifles or ammunition without the instructor telling you to.
- b. Never leave the rifle range without the instructor's permission.
- c. Always carry the rifle with the muzzle pointing upwards.
- d. Always have the muzzle pointing toward the target when the rifle is loaded.
- e. If in doubt; ASK the instructor!

General safety regulations for rifle handling

- a. Never point the rifle at someone.
- b. Always check that the rifle is empty when you receive or give the rifle to someone. Look inside the magazine and chamber and feel inside the chamber.
- c. Never carry or transport the rifle completely loaded.
- d. Never leave a half-loaded or loaded rifle.
- e. Always check for safe background before firing the rifle

Rifle handling in Longyearbyen, Svea Gruva, Barentsburg and Ny-Ålesund

- a. It is prohibited to carry a rifle with ammunition in the magazine.
- b. No firearms in public buildings.
- c. Always carry the rifle so everyone can see that the rifle is empty (bolt open).

UNIS general rifle safety regulations

- a. The person(s) who collect the rifle is personally responsible for the rifle. Only persons who have signed out the rifle can handle the rifle.
- b. You are not permitted to handle rifles, ammunition or pyrotechnics while under the influence of alcohol or any kind of drugs.
- c. On private camping trips, where UNIS' firearms are present and alcohol is consumed, one of the participants shall be appointed "Safety Supervisor", and will be in charge of firearms and safety. This person cannot consume alcohol. This applies to both student and staff private trips.
- d. Rifles must be locked up when not in use. Ammunition and the rifles bolt are to be locked up separately from the rifle.

Mandatory, operational safety procedures when operating UNIS rifles

Checking out rifles from the UNIS logistics department

- a. Check that the rifle is empty when receiving the rifle.
- b. Check that you have the right ammunition; cal.30-06 and expanding rounds.
- c. Check that the rifle has no damages and that the sights are present and centered.
- d. You need to demonstrate to the responsible Technician that you can half-load and empty the rifle in a correct and safe manner. This will be done with "dummy ammunition". If you fail this demonstration, you will not be allowed to borrow a rifle for private outings, or have the responsibility for a rifle during fieldwork.
- e. After collecting the rifle you must either lock the rifle up in the designated rifle storage rack, or bringing it out of the building.

Storing of rifles and ammunition

- a. It is not allowed to bring rifles into the UNIS building apart from the shortest way to the rifle storage rack at the Logistics department.
- b. The rifle must be locked up in the rifle storage rack in the Logistics hallway. The bolt must be removed from the rifle and kept with you, along with the ammunition.
- c. Storing of rifles in the students quarters, or in private houses, is to be done by removing the bolt from the rifle and lock it up, together with the ammunition, in a separate safety cabinet. The rifle can then be stored in a closet. If you have an approved safety cabinet to fit the whole rifle, you can store it there, together with the ammunition.

Using the rifle as polar bear protection in the field

- a. Rifles should, as a main rule, be carried and transported empty (without ammunition in the magazine). Ammunition should be stored easily accessible on the stock (in a separate holder / pocket) or in an outer pocket in your clothing.
- b. In rare situations, where close encounters with polar bears might be expected, rifles can be carried half-loaded. When doing fieldwork as part of a UNIS group, the excursion leader will decide if and when to half-load a rifle. On private outings the student or staff will have to make this decision on their own.
- c. Rifles should, as a main rule, always be transported and carried inside the cover, even if the rifle is half-loaded. This will protect the rifle from sand, moisture and snow. If you for some reason do not use the cover, the muzzle and the moving parts must be protected from snow, moisture and dirt.
- d. Rifle maintenance consists of cleaning, visual inspection and verifying the functionality of the rifle without ammunition. This should be performed daily.
- e. Care must be taken while transporting the rifles. Always carry the rifle, and avoid fastening it to your backpack or sledge. When putting down the weapon, place it so that it will not fall or be damaged when you are not carrying it.

Procedure for half loading and emptying the rifle

Half-loading and emptying the rifle must be done under supervision of a partner (buddy-check principle) and must be done in the following procedure:

Half loading the rifle

- a. Walk well away from where people are gathered and let the rest of the group know that you are about to half-load the rifle.
- b. Sit down on your knee, while your partner is standing behind you, observing over your shoulder.
- c. Make sure to point the rifle in a safe direction at all times during the procedure.
- d. Pull the bolt back and check that the magazine and chamber are empty by looking inside and feeling inside the chamber.

- e. Fill the magazine with four rounds. Make sure the ammunition is placed all the way back against the magazine wall.
- f. Push the four rounds further down into the magazine and lead the bolt over the rounds, until around 4 cm. remains from the bolt's head to the chamber opening.
- g. Make sure that no rounds are led into the chamber by observing into the chamber during the whole procedure.
- h. Close the bolt completely while observing that the chamber is empty.
- i. Point the rifle to a safe direction and release the trigger.

Emptying the rifle

- a) Walk well away from where people are gathered and let the rest of the group know that you are about to empty the rifle.
- b) Sit down on your knee, while your partner is standing behind you, observing over your shoulder.
- c) Make sure to point the rifle in a safe direction at all times during the procedure.
- d) Pull the bolt back so you can observe the rounds inside the magazine.
- e) Open the magazine and take the rounds out. Count the rounds and make sure you have the same number as you half-loaded with.
- f) Inspect visually, and by feeling inside with your fingers, that the chamber and the magazine are empty.
- g) Close the bolt and release the trigger while pointing the rifle in a safe direction. NB! If you are entering town / a settlement, and you are carrying the rifle outside the cover, the bolt should be left in the back / rear position.

Safety training

General

Everyone who needs to use a rifle for fieldwork or who wants to borrow a rifle for private outings must complete and pass the UNIS rifle course (rifle handling and polar bear protection).

The course lasts approx. 4 hours and is done at the rifle range. The main content of the course is:

- Rifle types and main parts.
- Drill on half-loading, loading, firing and emptying the rifle (using dummy, non-explosive rounds).
- Safety instructions.
- Shooting theory.
- Shooting, lying down position.
- Shooting, knee standing position.
- Shooting, standing position (only if the collected skill of the group permits).
- Polar bear theory.
- Use of deterrents (Flare gun / signal pistol).
- Maintenance of rifles and flare guns and how to avoid / fix malfunctions.

Requirements for passing the rifle course

In order to pass the rifle course the participant must:

Hit within a circle of 40 cm, at 35 m distance, with four out of four rounds. The exercise is performed from a knee standing position, without time limit.

Demonstrate the he or she has understood, and can demonstrate, the following procedures within safe rifle handling:

- Half loading the rifle.
- Emptying the rifle.
- General safe rifle handling when carrying and operating the rifle at the rifle range.

If the participant fails to meet the requirements above, he or she will not be allowed to borrow a rifle for private outings, or be responsible for rifles during fieldwork. If he or she needs to use a rifle for fieldwork, another rifle course must be attended.

Registration of students and staff that have passed the rifle training course

All students and staff that have passed the rifle training course will be registered in a separate form. This form is stored along with the rifles in the storage room at UNIS.

The instructor in each single course is responsible for informing the course / project responsible about who has passed the rifle training course.



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