

Use of firearms (rifles) at UNIS

1. Introduction

UNIS uses firearms as part of our polar bear protection procedures. These regulations describe 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. Use of other kinds of firearms for polar bear protection, such as shot guns, revolvers and pistols are, as a main rule, not allowed at UNIS. Exceptions from this rule might be granted in special situations where the participating personnel have 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 in section 7.

2. 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 based on:

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

3. 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 all painted in red or blue 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 gram, expanding bullet and a minimum striking force at 2 700J measured at 100m.

Training ammunition: Live ammunition used for training. Normally not expanding rounds.

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

Emptying the rifle: Removing ammunition from 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 off polar bears, or for signaling for help.

4. Access to firearms at UNIS

Formal requirements

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

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

Or

- Permission from The Governor on Svalbard (Sysselmannen), stating that you are allowed to rent a rifle for polar bear protection on Svalbard. You can obtain this permission by following the description on the Governor's web page:

<https://www.sysselmannen.no/en/weapon/renting-firearms/>

In cases where UNIS affiliated staff is well known by the rifle responsible at UNIS, access to rifles can be granted by UNIS without the documentation described above. The legal basis for this practice is the Norwegian weapon regulations / våpenforskriften; "Forskrift om skytevåpen, våpendeler og ammunisjon mv.» dated 01.07.2009. <https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2009-06-25-904>

In addition to the documentation and regulations stated above, the following is required:

- you will need to have **completed and passed** the UNIS rifle safety training within the last 6 months
- 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.

You need to bring a copy of your weapon license or permission from the Governor on Svalbard as documentation. A copy of this certificate will be stored at UNIS together with a copy of the rental registration form.

You must bring the rental registration form with you at all times as long as you are carrying the rifle.

5. Safety regulations

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

- a. 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.
- b. It is not allowed to perform any kind of rifle drill / practice on the campus area, even if the rifle is empty.
- c. It is not allowed to bring rifles into the building, apart from the shortest way to the rifle storage rack by the Logistics department.
- d. All rifles should be locked up in the rifle storage rack by the Logistics department. It is not allowed to store rifles in offices, classrooms, labs or other storage facilities.

5.2 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 for help.

5.3 General safety regulations for rifle handling

- a. Never point the rifle at anyone.
- b. Always check that the rifle is empty when you receive or hand 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

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

- a. It is not allowed to carry a rifle with ammunition in the magazine.
- b. It is not allowed to bring rifles or other kinds of firearms into public buildings.
- c. Always carry the rifle so everyone can see that the rifle should be carried empty with the bolt removed or in the rear position.

5.5 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 outings for students and / or staff 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 should not be under influence of alcohol or any kind of drugs.
- d. Rifles must be locked up when not in use. Ammunition and the rifle bolt should be locked up separately from the rifle.

6. Mandatory, operational safety procedures when operating UNIS rifles

6.1 *Checking out rifles from the UNIS logistics department*

- a. Check that the rifle is empty when receiving it.
- 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 take it out of the building.

6.2 *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. The rifle must be locked up in the rifle storage rack by the Logistics department at all times. The bolt must be removed from the rifle and kept with you, along with the ammunition.
- b. When storing rifles in the student's houses or in private houses, the bolt should be removed from the rifle and locked 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.

6.3 *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 the rifles. On private outings the student or staff should make this decision on their own.
- c. Rifles should, as a main rule, always be transported and carried inside the cover, even when 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 done daily.
- e. Transport the rifles with care. Always carry the rifle, and avoid fastening it to your backpack or sledge. When putting down the rifle, place it in a way that it will not fall or be damaged.

6.4 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:

6.5 Half loading the rifle

- a. Walk well away from the rest of the group and let them 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. 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 in a safe direction and release the trigger.

6.6 Emptying the rifle

- a. Walk away from the rest of the group and let them 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. 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 remove the rounds. Count the rounds and make sure you have the same number as you half-loaded with.
- f. Check that the magazine and chamber are empty by looking inside and feeling inside the chamber.
- g. Close the bolt and release the trigger while pointing the rifle in a safe direction.

NB! If you are entering a settlement and you are carrying the rifle outside the cover, the bolt should be left in the rear position.

7. Safety training

7.1 General

Everyone in need of using 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 contents of the course are:

- 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.

7.2 Requirements for passing the rifle course

In order to pass the rifle course the participant must:

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

Demonstrate that 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.

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.



7.3 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 at UNIS.

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

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