



HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE OPERATIONS POLICY

HCSO Issued & Approved Firearms and Ammunition

Distribution:	All Employees	Index:	OPS 0502
Responsible Unit:	Administrative Services Division	Rescinds:	OPS 0502 (dated 7/15/17)
		MD Code:	See References

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1. Purpose

To provide members of the Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) with guidelines regarding Agency approved firearms, ammunition, and qualification procedures.

2. Policy

Deputies will carry, use, and maintain firearms in accordance with this directive.

3. Definitions

AGENCY ARMORER: a firearms instructor who has been specifically trained in the detailed disassembly, repair, reassembly, functioning, and inspection techniques for Agency firearms. The Agency will recognize trained armorers even if they are operating outside of the manufacturers' certification time limits.

APPROVED HANDGUN: an Agency issued handgun, or a personally owned handgun, that meets the Agency specifications outlined in this policy; with which a deputy has successfully qualified in compliance with Agency and Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC) regulations.

AUTHORIZED: the legal or official right to act authoritatively and with discretion.

FIREARMS INSTRUCTOR: a deputy of any rank designated as range officer and certified by the MPTSC as a firearms instructor. In the absence of the Range Master, the firearms instructor will have overall responsibility for command and control of all personnel, regardless of rank, while the range is in operation.

MINUTE OF ANGLE (MOA): used to help measure shooting in minutes since a bullet moves in an arch-shaped trajectory.

MOS: Modular Optic System

PATROL SATURATION PROGRAM (PSP): the HCSO take home vehicle program.

RANGE MASTER: a certified firearms instructor approved by the Sheriff, who has overall responsibility for command and control of all personnel, regardless of department or rank, during range operations, and is responsible for the range facility, to include grounds maintenance, equipment maintenance, and security. The Range Master will report to the **Director** of the Training Academy for duties, assignments, and to coordinate scheduling for range activities. The Range Master will maintain his certification as an armorer for all Agency firearm systems and be responsible for the overall inventory of all Agency firearms.

RED DOT OPTIC: is a common classification for a type of non-magnifying reflector (or reflex) sight for firearms, and other devices that require aiming, that gives the user a point of aim in the form of an illuminated red dot.

SECONDARY HANDGUN: approved handgun, meeting Agency specifications, carried while on duty, commonly referred to as a “back-up gun.”

4. References

MD Code, Criminal Law, § 4-104
MD Code, Criminal Law, § 4-301
MD Code, Public Safety, § 3-501
MD Code, Public Safety, § 5-102
MD Code, Health - General, § 10-101

5. Procedures

A. Agency Issued Handgun

1. The primary handgun issued to deputies is the Glock “Safe Action” pistol. The Glock Model 45 will be the primary pistol issued to uniformed authorized personnel.
2. Deputies assigned to covert, plain clothes, or administrative units may be issued a Glock Model 48 as a substitute or in addition to the Glock Model 45.
3. Deputies not assigned to covert, plain clothes, or administrative units requesting substitution for the Glock Model 45 or issuance of a second pistol must be approved in writing by the Bureau Chief of the member requesting the change.
4. All handguns will be carried with a fully loaded magazine and one round in the chamber.
5. Deputies may carry an approved secondary handgun in addition to the issued handgun, in accordance with Agency specifications, as outlined in Section 5.I.
6. Red Dot Optics use on Agency Issued Handgun
 - a. Range Master will approve and issue the red dot optic.
 - b. Only deputies who completed the agency red dot optic training may carry a Glock 45 MOS or Glock 48 MOS.
 - c. Installation, remounting or adjustments will be made by the Range Master or designee.
 - d. Damaged red dot optics will be reported as outlined in policy ADM 0705 – Lost or Damaged Equipment and reported to the Range Master.

B. Issuance of HCSO Firearms

1. HCSO firearms may be issued to individuals, divisions, or units.
2. All firearms assigned to a division or unit will be the responsibility of the division or unit commander. When there is a change of commanders or custodial officers:

- a. Firearms assigned to a division or unit will be physically inventoried by both the incoming and outgoing commanders;
 - b. The inventory will be documented using the Command Change Firearms Inventory ([SO-240](#)) and signed by both the incoming and outgoing commanders; and
 - c. The original Command Change Firearms Inventory ([SO-240](#)) will be forwarded to the Range Master within 30 days of the command change and a copy will be retained and filed by the incoming commander of the unit.
3. Resolution of firearms inventory discrepancies between the Range Master and the Division will be resolved by the Administrative Services Division Commander.
 4. Commanders who take possession of a firearm for administrative purposes will ensure the custody of the firearm as follows:
 - a. If the firearm can or will be returned to the deputy in less than five days, the respective commander may properly secure the firearm. The Range Master will be immediately notified of this action via email.
 - b. If the firearm cannot or will not be returned to the deputy in less than five days, the commander will immediately contact the Range Master who will secure the firearm in the Agency armory.
 5. The Range Master will authorize the purchase, issuance, and transfer of all Agency firearms.
 6. No firearms will be issued to or transferred from one deputy to another, or from one unit to another, without approval of the Range Master.
 7. Any firearm returned or scheduled for transfer will be forwarded to the Range Master accompanied by a HCSO Memorandum ([SO-212](#)) explaining the reason for return or transfer.
 8. The Range Master will complete all forms associated with the return or transfer of the firearm.
 9. All firearms received by the Range Master will be inspected by an Agency armorer before being re-issued.
 10. Firearms issued to deputies will require qualification with that specific weapon as soon as possible.
 11. The Sheriff has the authority, and reserves the right, to authorize specific weapons for duty use.

C. Carrying Firearms

1. Agency members are prohibited from carrying unauthorized firearms.
2. While on duty in public and not in uniform, all handguns will be concealed unless a deputy's respective Division Commander provides a written exemption to [PER 0701](#) Uniform Appearance.
 - a. The written exemption will detail the reason behind the exemption and will be kept in the deputy's personnel file.
 - b. If the exemption is authorized, the deputy will wear his badge next to the authorized holster containing the handgun when not in uniform.
3. When a law enforcement deputy is on-duty he will:

- a. Be armed with an HCSO-issued handgun; and
 - b. Carry his issued HCSO badge or HCSO identification card, unless in a covert assignment.
4. When a law enforcement deputy is off duty, he:
- a. May carry an HCSO-issued or HCSO-approved handgun;
 - b. Will, if carrying an approved firearm off-duty, carry the firearm in an approved holster;
 - c. Will carry his badge or HCSO identification card, unless assigned to a covert assignment or if unreasonable or impractical; and
 - d. Will, if operating, or if a passenger in, a **PSP** vehicle while off-duty, carry a HCSO approved firearm.
5. Carrying a handgun off-duty is not mandatory unless operating an Agency vehicle.
6. Pursuant to policy, an employee will not carry an issued or approved firearm with any measurable level of alcohol in his system. (Exceptions granted for employees approved to consume alcohol in the performance of their investigative or official duties).
7. Authorization to carry a firearm while on "Light Duty" will be determined by the deputy's Division Commander, dependent upon the reason for the altered duty status, and after consultation with the Director of Human Resources.
- a. Authorization will be documented in writing via Memorandum ([SO-212](#)) for inclusion in the deputy's personnel file.
8. The wearing or carrying of any weapon, to include duty firearms, is prohibited for all participants in a HCSO trial board.

D. Firearms in Court

1. While attending any court or Maryland Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) where carrying or displaying of firearms is restricted, HCSO employees will comply with those restrictions.
2. While attending any court as a defendant in a criminal trial, a plaintiff in a civil trial, or while serving as a juror, deputies will not carry a firearm.
3. A deputy will not carry a firearm when they are a defendant in a civil trial unless the trial is a result of their official duties as a deputy.

E. Safety and Security

1. Only deputies and those civilian employees specifically authorized by the nature of their assignment to do so, may carry, use, clean, or otherwise handle HCSO-issued firearms.
2. Each member will be responsible for the care, maintenance, safety, and security of all issued firearms and related equipment.
3. A deputy should turn over his firearm for inspection only to a supervisor, a firearms instructor, or Agency armorer, and only after the firearm has been completely unloaded.

4. Pursuant to MD CODE, Criminal Law, § 4-104, a deputy will not store or leave a loaded firearm in any location where, except in the case of unlawful entry, an unsupervised minor would gain access to the firearm.
5. Deputies will properly secure firearms in a locked storage container whenever they are not worn, and in the home, all HCSO issued weapons will be secured in a manner that makes them inaccessible to others or inoperable.
 - a. All firearms should be unloaded in a safe manner and made safe before storage or may be secured while loaded in a locked storage area or container.
 - b. Cable locks are available, and use is strongly recommended, for the HCSO issued or approved firearms.
6. When stored in a motor vehicle, handguns must be secured in a locked trunk.
 - a. If the vehicle has no trunk, the firearm will be secured in an HCSO issued or approved locked case/storage compartment. Rifles and shotguns will be secured in an HCSO vehicle rack, or in an issued or approved case/storage compartment.
 - b. When a deputy is off-duty and his Agency vehicle is not being used, all firearms, including personally owned firearms, will be removed from the Agency vehicle.
7. In HCSO facilities, firearms will be kept out of reach of the public and will not be left unsecured or unattended.

F. Firearm Inspection & Cleaning

1. Prior to inspection and cleaning, all firearms will be checked and re-checked (following proper administrative unloading procedures) to ensure that they are unloaded and safe.
2. Deputies will regularly inspect and maintain their firearms, magazines, ammunition, holsters, and duty belt to prevent accumulation of dirt, the formation of rust, or corrosion and excessive wear.
3. Firearms will be cleaned in a safe location that is free from distraction at least once a month, after they have been fired, or when subjected to inclement weather or other contaminants.

G. Repairs and Maintenance

1. Any deputy who believes his HCSO issued firearm is unsafe will immediately notify their immediate supervisor and an Agency armorer and will not use the firearm until it has been inspected by the armorer.
 - a. Only an approved HCSO Agency armorer may repair, have repaired, or modify any HCSO firearm.
 - b. Individual deputies will not make any repairs or modifications to HCSO approved firearms without approval of the Range Master (This applies to issued, approved off-duty or secondary handguns).
2. If a HCSO-issued firearm requires repairs or adjustments, the deputy to whom it is issued will:
 - a. Complete a Request for Firearms Maintenance ([SO-167](#)), which will be forwarded to the Range Master;

- b. Make an appointment with the Range Master or an Agency armorer;
- c. Deliver the firearm to the armorer at the scheduled appointment time; and
- d. After the repairs and adjustments have been made, the firearm will be test-fired by the repairing armorer, and by the deputy to whom the firearm is issued as soon as possible.

3. If the armorer believes that he cannot repair the firearm:

- a. The deputy who was issued the firearm will be immediately referred to the Range Master so a new firearm may be issued;
- b. The original firearm will be turned in to the Range Master and taken out of service until repairs can be completed or the firearm can be replaced; and
- c. If the slide or sights are replaced, the deputy issued the firearm will be required to successfully complete a daylight qualification course.

H. Personally Owned Handguns

1. The Range Master is responsible for approving firearms carried by deputies.
2. A secondary handgun will be concealed while carried during a normal duty assignment.
3. A handgun may be used as an off-duty or secondary firearm if it:
 - a. Is a semi-automatic handgun;
 - b. Is a 40 caliber **Smith & Wesson**, 9mm Luger, .45 ACP, .380 ACP;
 - c. Has at least a 5-pound trigger pull;
 - d. Is a double action only or double action-single action trigger type; (No Single Action Pistols); and
 - e. Has a six-round minimum magazine capacity.
4. If a handgun that holds fewer than eight rounds is used as an off-duty firearm, a second magazine must be carried.
5. Approval of off-duty/secondary handguns will be limited to two handguns per deputy at any time.
6. A deputy may not carry more than two handguns on his person at any time.
7. Only firearms legal for sale in the State of Maryland may be used as an off-duty or secondary firearm regardless of the deputy's state of residency.

I. Approval and Registration of Personally Owned Firearms

1. Personally owned handguns must be approved prior to being carried by deputies off duty.
2. **Personally owned red dot optics must be approved prior to being used by deputies off duty.**

- a. Only deputies who completed the agency red dot optic training may carry a red dot optic on an approved personally owned firearm
 - b. A red dot optic must not be removed from the firearm during a battery replacement.
 - c. Approved personally owned firearm must have suppressor height or compatible iron sights and not exceed 3.25 MOA.
 - d. The Range Master will provide a list of approved red dot optics manufactures published on Power DMS yearly.
3. Deputies must demonstrate proficiency in use, carrying, and cleaning of the firearm to a firearms instructor prior to approval.
 4. A deputy requesting to carry a personally owned firearm will:
 - a. Submit a Request/Approval to Carry **Weapon** (SO-239);
 - b. Ensure that the firearm is inspected by an HCSO armorer; and
 - c. Complete required qualifications.
 5. Any adjustment or modification to an approved personally owned handgun requires prior approval and re-inspection by an Agency armorer prior to use and carry.
 6. Deputies approved to use and carry a personally owned handgun are responsible for all expenses associated with repairing, maintaining, and qualifying with these firearms.
 7. Deputies purchasing or transferring a regulated firearm in the State of Maryland, whether through a Federal Firearms Licensed (FFL) Dealer or by private (secondary) sale, are required to properly register the regulated firearm with the Maryland State Police, or if not a Maryland resident, to comply with legal requirements of the deputy's state of residency.

J. Shotguns

1. The Agency will issue shotguns to enhance the tactical capabilities of deputies responding to emergencies. Only deputies trained and certified in the handling and operation of a shotgun will be allowed to carry and/or deploy these weapon systems.
2. Issued shotguns will be limited to one shotgun per deputy at any time.
3. Deputies may only use HCSO-issued shotguns while on-duty or on official duties.
4. All law enforcement deputies, sergeant and below, will be required to qualify with a shotgun at least once per year and all deputies, regardless of rank or classification, who have been issued a shotgun will be required to qualify at least once per year.
 - a. All deputies qualifying with a shotgun must meet a minimum passing score of 70.
 - b. Deputies who fail to qualify with a minimum passing score of 70 with the shotgun will be afforded an additional opportunity to qualify. If they fail to qualify after this second attempt, a determination will be made by the respective deputy's Bureau Chief and Division Commander if

additional training will be afforded or if other administrative or performance options will be initiated.

5. Modifications or additions to issued shotguns must be approved by the Range Master. This includes:
 - a. Optics;
 - b. Weapon mounted lights; and
 - c. Slings.
6. All Repairs, modifications or additions to Agency issued shotguns must be conducted by Agency armorers.
7. Shotguns that are carried in HCSO vehicles will:
 - a. Be secured in an HCSO-issued or HCSO-approved case in the vehicle's trunk;
 - b. Be secured in an HCSO-issued rack;
 - c. Be carried with a fully loaded magazine tube, but no ammunition will be in the chamber (i.e., car-carry condition); and
 - d. Not be laid on the seat or carried in any way that would allow the shotgun to be thrown about inside the vehicle.

K. Patrol Rifles

1. The Agency will issue patrol rifles to enhance the tactical capabilities of deputies responding to emergencies. Only deputies trained and certified in the handling and operation of a patrol rifle will be allowed to carry and/or deploy these weapon systems.
2. Patrol rifles will be issued in addition to the Glock pistol(s) and Agency shotgun. Patrol rifles will be limited to one rifle per deputy at any time.
3. Only Agency issued patrol rifles may be carried for duty use.
4. Modifications or additions to issued rifles must be approved by the Range Master. This includes:
 - a. Optics (any optics added to rifles must be co-witnessed, and **three** power or less. Optics **four** power or more change the classification of the rifle);
 - b. Weapon mounted lights; and
 - c. Slings (single- or double-point slings may be used).
5. All Repairs, modifications or additions to Agency issued patrol rifles must be conducted by Agency armorers.
6. Prior to carrying or using a patrol rifle, a deputy must attend and successfully complete the HCSO Basic Patrol Rifle School.

7. Attendance priority for the Basic Rifle School will be given to deputies and Corporals assigned to the Police Services Bureau precincts, Special Operations Division, School Resource Officers, Warrant Unit, and the Civil Process Unit.
8. A deputy will be considered for participation in the Basic Rifle School if they:
 - a. Achieved a **passing score** (daylight pistol and dim light pistol) during their most recent **pistol qualification**; and
 - b. Received a recommendation from their Shift Commander/Unit Supervisor and obtain final approval to attend from their Division Commander via Training Request ([SO-129](#)).
9. Upon successful completion of the Basic Rifle School, deputies will be authorized to use and carry an HCSO-issued rifle.
10. Deputies issued a rifle will complete semi-annual rifle qualifications during the first six months and last six months of each calendar year.
11. A **passing score** must be achieved on each course with the issued/approved rifle.
12. If a deputy does not attempt to qualify with a patrol rifle during the six-month period, his Division Commander will be notified by the Training Academy.
13. Should a deputy not attempt to qualify with their rifle per the guidelines set forth in this policy, the issued patrol rifle will be taken.
14. Should a deputy then wish to seek the return of the rifle for duty use, the deputy must successfully pass a retraining rifle course as designated by the Range Master, as well as the required qualifications.
 - a. A deputy will make this request in writing via Memorandum ([SO-212](#)) through his chain of command to the Range Master.
15. Rifles will be carried bolt forward on an empty chamber, firearm on safe with the charged magazine inserted (i.e., car-carry condition). Regardless of the magazine capacity, deputies will load each magazine with two less rounds than the total magazine capacity (i.e., 28 rounds in a 30-round magazine).

L. Additional or Specialized Firearms

1. Additional or specialized firearms are authorized for use by certain units as approved by the Sheriff. The use of these firearms will be governed by a local Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

M. Ammunition

1. Only HCSO issued ammunition will be carried in Agency issued firearms; **however, Agency approved ammunition may be used to practice with Agency issued firearms.**
2. Only ammunition approved by the Range Master will be used and carried in off-duty or secondary handguns. This does not prohibit practice as outlined below in Section 5.M.5.
3. The ammunition carried in off-duty or secondary handguns must be factory loaded with a hollow point style bullet.

4. Ammunition used for off-duty or secondary handgun (firearms not issued by the Agency) qualifications, practice, and approved carry will be purchased at the expense of the deputy.
5. Any practice with Agency firearms will be conducted using factory loaded, full metal jacketed ammunition. No re-loaded or soft nose type ammunition will be used in Agency handguns. This directive is effective regardless of the location of the training/practice.
6. A deputy desiring to practice with their HCSO issued firearm, while off-duty, at a non-Agency range, will bear the expense of the ammunition.
7. Additional or specialized ammunition may be authorized for use by certain units, as approved in writing by the Bureau Chief, after consultation with the Range Master.
 - a. Use of this ammunition will be governed by a local SOP.

N. Holsters

1. When in uniform, the primary handgun will only be carried in an Agency issued holster, attached to an Agency issued gun belt, with Agency issued magazine pouch. Administrative uniformed personnel will also use an Agency issued holster, with an issued combination magazine/cuff case.
2. While off-duty, if carrying an approved firearm, deputies will carry the firearm in an approved holster.
3. The HCSO Range Master must approve, and document, off-duty, and secondary holsters for use with personally owned handguns, the following guidelines will apply:
 - a. The holster must have a covered trigger guard and provide concealment when worn;
 - b. The holster should have a thumb strap, unless the holster is of a design that it has a retention device that securely holds the firearm in place;
 - c. The holster must be of a design that allows for one handed draw and re-holstering of the firearm; and
 - d. A deputy must qualify with the holster he intends to carry off-duty.
4. Deputies in a non-uniform investigative assignment will carry the issued/approved handgun in an approved holster that provides concealment and a level of retention approved by the Range Master.
 - a. These deputies will also carry handcuffs and one additional magazine in an approved manner.
 - b. Exceptions granted for covert assignments at the discretion of the Division Commander will be documented and placed in the employee's personnel file.

O. Weapon-Mounted Lighting Systems

1. Only Agency issued holster and weapon mounted lights may be used with Agency handguns.
2. The Agency issued weapon-mounted light system will be equipped with a toggle switch for on/off operation.
3. Modifications of Agency weapon-mounted lights from factory settings are not permitted. The use of lasers on Agency firearms is also prohibited: Exceptions granted for firearms used by Special Response Team (SRT) and Special Investigations Division (SID).

4. When carrying a weapon-mounted light system, a deputy must also carry a secondary flashlight. Under no circumstance, will the weapon-mounted light be used for general illumination unless there is justification to have the firearm un-holstered.
5. Prior to modifying an issued or approved shotgun or patrol rifle with a weapon mounted light system, the deputy must have approval by the Range Master.
6. Prior to using any weapon mounted lighting system deputies must successfully pass a HCSO approved training on the use of these systems.

P. Purchase of Firearms

1. No Agency handgun will be purchased by a qualifying individual without the approval of the Range Master and the Chief of the Services and Support Bureau.
2. The Agency reserves the right to determine when an Agency weapon may be sold and to whom it will be sold, and the sale will be guided by applicable law and **PER 1007 Purchase of HCSO Issued Handguns**.

Q. Firearms Inventories and Supervisory Inspection

1. Annually, Precinct and Division Commanders will be directed by the Range Master to perform a full physical inventory of all HCSO owned firearms issued to personnel under their command or held at units, including handguns, shotguns, rifles, Honor Guard rifles, specialty weapons, etc.
2. Firearms inventories will:
 - a. Be completed by January 31 of each calendar year;
 - b. Be documented on Command Change/Firearms Inventory ([SO-240](#)); and
 - c. Be forwarded to the Range Master.
3. Precinct and Division Commanders will contact the Services and Support Commander to resolve any discrepancies.
4. The Range Master will review each Division's completed inventory and complete an overall analysis to account for each HCSO owned firearm.

R. Missing Firearms

1. Missing firearms will require the writing of **an Incident Report in the Records Management System** documenting the incident surrounding the missing firearm, and subsequent entry of the firearm into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).
2. Precinct and Division Commanders will immediately notify their Bureau Chief, through official channels regarding any missing firearm.
3. The Bureau Chief will direct that an administrative and/or criminal investigation be conducted.
4. The Range Master, Administrative Services Division Commander, and the Chief of the Services and Support Bureau will also be immediately notified in writing of any missing firearms.

S. Bi-Monthly Inspection

1. Supervisors will conduct bi-monthly inspections of their personnel which will be documented on the Personnel and Vehicle Inspection Sheet (SO-139). Refer to PER 0705 Inspection Policy.
2. Included in the bi-monthly inspection, supervisors will visually inspect all Agency firearms assigned to deputies in their span of control.
3. The serial numbers, cleanliness, ammunition count, and overall operational status of each firearm should be documented on the Personnel and Vehicle Inspection Sheet (SO-139).

T. Preclusions

1. Deputies will not use their Agency issued firearms for any secondary employment outside of Harford County.

Approved

JEFFREY R. GAHLER
SHERIFF
DATE 1-23-23