

WEAPON SAFETY & WEARING YOUR EQUIPAGE IN BATTLE

INTRO.: Any weapon is only as safe as the person operating it. We consider safety to be everyone's responsibility; it is not just something that a safety officer is concerned about.

We always treat a fire arm like it is loaded hence we avoid any accidental discharges.

We follow Orders and Commands on the field (and in camp) especially when handling or discharging our weapons.

We keep our weapons cleaned and properly maintained at all times.

We wear our equpage in a proper and safe manner so as not to interfere with others and to allow us to move at the double quick whenever required. Whenever we are not sure of something we ask for help or get clarification.

I. Weapon Safety

A. Review Primary Safety Directives

1. Always treat any gun like it is loaded
2. Be conscious of what way your gun is pointed

B. Review basic components of the musket

1. Barrel, Bands, Stock, Lock Plate, Hammer, Trigger, Trigger Guard, Nipple/Cone, Bolster, & Sling.



NOTE: The above un-labeled photo can be located at http://www.thunder-ridge-muzzleloading.com/images/musket_110.jpg

C. Handling & Shooting your musket

The following as referenced from the 7th TX Calvary's web-site at: http://www.7thtexasca.com/school_of_the_soldier.htm as retrieved on February 25, 2007.

1. Always follow orders and/or proper procedures
2. Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction
3. Front and Rear ranks assume the "T" position at the command "LOAD".
4. Rear rank moves "RIGHT" foot forward at "AIM" for firing to the front and left oblique.
5. Rear rank moves "LEFT" foot forward at "AIM" for firing to the right oblique.
6. ONLY cock the musket at the command "AIM".
7. Front rank maintains "T" position throughout the entire loading and firing sequence.
8. Rear rank reverts to "T" position when loading.
9. Before moving with a loaded musket, bring the musket to the "Prime" position with muzzle elevated, and lower the hammer to half cock.
10. Never allow the hammer to fall on the cone without a cap or "guard" in place.
11. At the command of "ORDER ARMS", lower the musket firmly but gently to the ground so as not to damage the butt plate or stock.
12. When using the ramrod, do not allow it to fall with full force to the breech.
13. If your musket fails to fire after loading it or a round fails to go off, re-cap and fire.
14. If a weapon fails to fire after capping it twice, or if you have any problems with it on the field simply advise your file & rank partners & step to the rear to see a file closer.
15. Never take a hit with a loaded weapon, discharge then die. This also goes for when "charging" an enemy position, especially artillery. If you have a "hot" weapon when the order to "charge" is given, dump the load.
16. Never use a nipple pick when loaded, you could ignite the powder charge.
17. Do not begin to clean your musket until back in camp.
18. The definition of a combat "safe" musket: At the half-cock, cap off nipple. Your half-cock can be tested by supporting your rifle's weight upside down by the trigger; it passes if the hammer doesn't release to strike the nipple.

D. Bayonets

1. Bayonets must properly fit the musket with a functional locking ring.
2. All bayonet scabbards must have the brass tip on them.

II. Weapon Maintenance

Please note there are several acceptable ways to clean the rifle/musket. Experience will dictate the best choice for each individual. I have chosen to address the good ole fashioned soap and water method. The following information was referenced from information on the 17th Michigan Volunteer's web-site located at <http://www.17thmicoe.org/Musket%20Cleaning.htm>.

A. Field Cleaning Your Musket:

1. Place a folded cleaning patch between the hammer and the nipple (cone).
2. Fill a tin cup full of hot, soapy water. Pour about one half of the cup carefully (so as not to scald your hand) down the barrel. A funnel is helpful here. Cover the end of the barrel with your finger or place a tompion in the muzzle. Swish the contents up and down several times and then pour it out on the ground. It should look black and cruddy if you did it right.
3. Pour the other half of the hot, soapy water into the barrel. Place a bristle brush or wire brush on the end of your cleaning rod. With the water still in the barrel, run the brush up and down several times. Pour the water out and repeat if the musket is especially dirty. The water should be coming out more or less clean.
4. Consider the use of a bore scraper. Always use proper attachments with the Springfield rifle, attaching patches to the ramrod by itself will cause the ramrod to get stuck.
5. Run a few patches down the bore to remove residual both the bore and the outside of the barrel. Only use fouling. Four or five patches should be adequate.
6. Place hammer at half cock. Remove the nipple (cone) with a nipple wrench.
7. Using cotton swabs and pipe cleaners, or patches and pipe cleaners, a nipple pick, clean all the fouling out of the bolster and flash channel. While you are doing this, soak the nipple (cone) in some hot water. All soldiers must have a nipple pick handy at all times.
8. After the bolster is clean, remove any fouling from the inside of the nipple using a pipe cleaner or nipple pick. Hold it up to the sunlight and look through the larger end. You should be able to see light through the opening at the bottom. If not, continue until you can.
9. Lightly oil the threads of the nipple and screw it back into the barrel slightly past "thumb tight." Do not over tighten.
10. Keep an oily rag in an empty cap tin with your field kit.

B. Cleaning Your Musket at Home:

1. Follow Field Cleaning steps Number 1 and 2 (above), then:
2. Remove the ramrod. Place the hammer at half-cock and loosen the lock assembly. Remove the barrel screw from the tang of the barrel. Remove the barrel bands. Turn the musket upside down and lightly tap the butt of the stock on the ground. Carefully lift the barrel from the stock.
3. Remove the nipple (cone) and place it in some Hydrogen Peroxide or hot soapy water to soak.
4. Place the barrel in a pail of hot, soapy water, bolster end in the water.
5. Pour a little warm water down the barrel. Use a sectional cleaning rod with an un-slotted jag. The jag has a flat bottom to clean the back of the breech.
6. Run your cleaning rod with the un-slotted Jag attached and run a patch up and down the barrel. Repeat with a wire brush attached to the cleaning rod, up and down the barrel. The brush will create suction drawing water from the pail. Remove the barrel from the pail after several passes with the brush.
7. Run a few patches down the barrel until they come out basically clean.
8. Soak a patch in Ballistol and run it down the barrel until patches come out clean. Run a patch soaked with Ballistol up and down the exterior of the barrel a few times and wipe of excess.
9. Dry the bore until the patches come out clean.

10. Oil the bore. Both the bore and the outside of the barrel.
11. Clean the bolster and flash channel with cotton swabs, with a nipple wrench, tooth brush and pipe cleaners. Clean any fouling from around the outside of the bolster area as well.
While you are doing this, soak the nipple up fouling if necessary. Remove any rust from barrel with (cone) in some hot water. Ballistol and steel wool. Clean the inside of nipple (cone) with pipe cleaners.
12. Remove the lock assembly. Spray with penetrating oil such as Ballistol. Apply white lithium grease to the moving parts (tumbler and sear). Clean visible dirt away with pipe cleaners.
13. Reassemble musket. Clean fouling or rust from ramrod if needed. Put some oil on the underside of the barrel bands and on threads of nipple (cone) before reinstalling.
14. Run an oiled patch down the barrel. Lightly oil the outside of the barrel and lock assembly.
15. Leave hammer at release position so all springs are stored un-cramped.
16. In about a week, run a couple patches down the barrel to remove any residual fouling that came out of the expansion cracks in the barrel as they cooled down.
17. Place a folded patch between hammer and nipple (cone). Re-oil inside and out, you are done until the next time you shoot.

NOTE: The US Army published three Rules for the Management and Cleaning of the Rifle Musket, Model [1855, 1861 and 1863 respectively], for the use of Soldiers with Descriptive Plates. The above information was retrieved February 25, 2007, from the 17th Michigan Volunteer's web-site, located at <http://www.17thmicoe.org/Musket%20Cleaning.htm> .

C. Storing Your Weapon

1. Use a gun sheath when possible; store in dry place, hang from ctr. tent pole w/hooks or twine

III. Wearing your Equipage

A. What equipment is worn in battle

1. Canteen, Cartridge Box, Belt, Cap Box, Haversack and Musket.
2. No sheathed knives, or backs packs*

B. How to properly wear the equipage

1. Make sure it's safe & does not interfere with your range of motion or file & rank partners
2. Helpful Hints – Tie up canteen or Haversack to keep them in the right place. Keep nipple picks in your hat band or cap box; don't place them IN your cartridge box to avoid accidentally dropping any of these objects into a muzzle.

Safety Excerpts from the Event Guidelines for Cedar Creek & Gettysburg: **Please read or review at your avail/convenience:**

“Be aware that when you sign your registration form, you are agreeing to abide by the Safety Regulations and Rules for this event, which will be actively and vigorously enforced. If you cannot abide by these procedures do not attend .

Safety: Each Company will appoint a designated Safety Officer to ensure general and weapons safety. The Company Safety Officer will report to the Regimental/Battalion Safety Officer. Each Regiment/Battalion will have an appointed designated Safety Officer to ensure general and weapons safety. The Regimental and/or Battalion Safety Officer will report to the Brigade Safety Officer. Each Brigade will have an appointed designated Safety Officer to ensure general and weapons safety. The Brigade Safety Officer will report to the Division Safety Officer. Each Division will have an appointed designated Safety Officer to ensure general and weapons safety. The Division Safety Officer will report to the Army Headquarters' Officer.

Weapons Safety inspection will be conducted prior to each battle and a written report will be verified and signed off by each Safety Officer at the previously mentioned levels. The Commanding Federal and Confederate General or their designees will make the final signoffs for their respective army, which is retained by the respective General.

NO black powder weapons of any kind will be carried or fired by any participant less than 16 years of age. Children under 16 are not permitted on the field during the reenactments. Exception is made for functional musicians (boys 11 or older who can actually play a drum, a fife or a bugle). Young boys are not to serve as color bearers during battle reenactments. NO projectiles, bullets, musket balls, or loading blocks will be carried at any time at the scene of an event.

Opposing troops will not advance within 25 yards of another unit at any time during this event. All firing will be done at an elevated angle. Never aim a weapon directly at another person. *There will be no weapons fired in the bivouac or encampment area or along marching routes.*

All cartridges must be made up prior to an event. In the case of a prolonged event or unexpected firing activities, cartridges may be made at a designated safety area only, not in camp or near exposed flames.

Maximum musket or rifle cartridges will follow the Table of Maximum Loads. Only FFg or FFFg black powder will be used - NO Pyrodex. NO FFFFg (4F) powder will be used except by artillery units for priming. Cartridge paper will not be placed in the barrel and NO wadding or ramming will be permitted except in the use of handguns. Multiple loading is not permitted. POWDER CHARGES limited to a maximum of 70 grains for .54-.58 caliber and 90 grains for .69 caliber, 60 grains for carbines; 14 and 30 grains for .36 and .44 caliber pistols respectively.

Cartridges will not be carried anywhere on the person except in a hard cartridge box using the proper tin flash boxes and carried in a secure location. Powder will only be carried in the form of cartridges. Ramrods can be carried but are not to be drawn and used unless directed by the Company Safety Officer for safety checks.

Each unit commander is responsible for the conduct of his men (this includes women and children). He is responsible to make sure all under his command are aware of, understand and abide by the rules.

Weapons: 3 band muskets required; correct 2 banders allowed only by prior written approval from the commanding General of the appropriate army subject to supporting historical documentation. NO non-period weapons. *NO civilian weapons. Side arms carried ONLY by officers. Ramrods are not to be drawn on the field with the exception of Safety personnel clearing a weapon behind the firing line. NO sheath knives will be carried on the field.* Bayonets are not to be fixed on the field. Scabbards must have appropriate tips.

Always elevate when firing. No weapons are to be discharged within camp boundaries with the exception of weapons inspection under supervision of the unit safety officer or commanding officer. No tompons may be taken to the field.”

<http://www.gettysburgreenactment.com/registration/safety.htm>. Annual Gettysburg Civil War Battle Reenactment July 6, 7 & 8, 2007 - Reenactment Safety Rules, retrieved February 26, 2007.

http://www.cedarcreekbattlefield.org/CC_Reg.pdf . 143rd Anniversary Reenactment of the Battle of Cedar Creek, October 19-21, 2007. “RULES, REGULATIONS & CAMPING.” Retrieved February 26, 2007.