



Home Office

# FIREARMS SECURITY



A Brief Guide

## THIS LEAFLET GIVES ADVICE ON THE LEVELS OF SECURITY REQUIRED FOR SECTION 1 FIREARMS, SECTION 1 AMMUNITION AND SHOTGUNS. ('FIREARMS' MEANS BOTH SECTION 1 FIREARMS AND SHOTGUNS).

### WHAT DOES THE LAW REQUIRE?

Under the Firearms Rules 1998, a prescribed safekeeping condition is attached to all firearm and shotgun certificates. It is an offence not to comply with these conditions. The maximum penalty for this offence can be up to 6 months in prison, or a fine, or both.

The safekeeping condition attached to firearms or shotgun certificates requires that the guns and section 1 ammunition **must be stored securely to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, unauthorised people taking or using them. Any other person who does not hold a firearm or shotgun certificate is included in the term 'unauthorised'**. When a gun or section 1 ammunition is being used or the holder has the gun with him for some purpose connected with its use, transfer or sale, **reasonable precautions must be taken for the safe custody of the gun(s) and section 1 ammunition.**

The condition does not apply to the ammunition for a shotgun. However, as a matter of common sense, you should take reasonable precautions for its safe custody.

*Your local police firearms licensing department can give you advice on security arrangements.*

### WHAT IS 'SECURE STORAGE'?

The Firearms Rules do not prescribe how firearms must be kept securely, but the Home Office has issued guidance. Briefly this recommends that you store them in a locked gun cabinet or other similarly secure container. In some cases if you don't have a gun cabinet, it **may** be acceptable to remove the firing mechanism from a firearm and store it in a

secure container, for example, a safe. In these cases you should then lock away the rest of the firearm. A securely built gunroom or cellar with a steel door that locks can also be an acceptable form of storage. Section 1 ammunition can be stored in a separate secure compartment within a gun cabinet or in its own secure container. When considering whether storage arrangements are secure enough, **the police will look at the circumstances of each case and at the overall security arrangements, including the security of the premises where the firearms and ammunition are kept.**

It may be helpful to think of security in terms of levels that may be applied in any given case. To this end **3 levels** of security are generally accepted.

### Level 1

This will be applicable in most cases and can be met by using a suitable gun cabinet. Where one firearm only is held, a gun clamp may suffice. Other considerations would be a low crime rate area and whether the property has outer doors and windows fitted with suitable locking devices.

### Level 2

This will be applicable where extra security is desirable. This may be because of a high crime rate location, repeat victimisation or that a substantial number of firearms are being held. Additional security would be exit doors fitted with locks to BS3621, an audible intruder alarm covering the area where the guns are stored and possibly splitting the risk by the provision of more than one cabinet.

### Level 3

Where the risk is deemed the greatest, then splitting the risk is desirable especially where large numbers of guns are involved. Additional target hardening of the storage cabinet(s) and an audible intruder alarm protecting the whole of the premises may also be considered.

*Please note that more detailed information is available from your local police firearms licensing department.*

## WHAT TYPES OF SECURITY ARE AVAILABLE?

Perhaps the most important time when both you and the police will need to consider your security is when you apply for the grant or renewal of your certificate(s). A Firearms Enquiry Officer (FEO) may visit you to discuss and advise on such arrangements. More information about the various types of security is given below. In practice there should be no need for significant change if the recommendations made at the time of grant or last renewal were accepted and implemented, and there has been no subsequent change in circumstances.

*The security of your firearms will depend not only on how the firearms are stored, but also on the overall security of the property where the firearms are kept.*

### Gun cabinets

As commercially manufactured firearm cabinets are widely available, this will probably be the preferred method of security for most people. There is a British standard for gun cabinets (BS 7558). Before you buy a cabinet you should ask the seller to show you a test certificate to confirm the cabinet meets the above standard. It is not compulsory to have a cabinet that meets the British Standard however, and having such a cabinet does not necessarily guarantee that you are meeting the safekeeping condition.

It is recommended that a cabinet should have the following features:

- It should be made from sheet steel at least 14 swg (standard wire gauge) (2 mm) thick. All seams should be continuously welded, or the cabinet body formed by bend construction.
- All hinges should be on the inside of the cabinet, but if they are external or exposed, then hinge bolts, blocks or anti-lever bars should be provided.
- Lock mechanisms should be on the inside of the cabinet. The lock should contain at least 5 levers to BS 3621 standard or equivalent. Alternatively, good quality hardened padlocks and staples should be fitted to the cabinet.

- Full-length side hinged cabinets should have two locks at points one third and two-thirds the height of the cabinet.
- The cabinet may contain, or have attached, a separate lockable container to store ammunition.

### Gun clamps

For one firearm, an alternative option to a cabinet may be a gun clamp. It should:

- be made out of steel that is at least 14 swg (2mm) thick;
- have seam-welded joints, or be formed by bend construction; and
- have a lock that meets BS 3621 standard or equivalent. Alternatively a good quality hardened padlock should be fitted.

### Steel cables

In certain circumstances a high tensile steel cable secured with a hardened padlock may be an appropriate security method.

### Installation advice

Any security device should be securely fixed to the fabric of the building.

- For preference it should be in a room or area that does not have direct access to the outside of a building.
- It should not be in a garage, shed or other outside building, except in certain circumstances.
- When considering large or heavy gun cabinets, you should consider the load bearing strength of your floors.
- Wherever possible, it should be fixed to a wall that is built from bricks or concrete blocks or to the floor.

- The container should be out of sight (unless the firearm is held for display purposes). If it is in a corner, it is more difficult for a thief to attack it.
- You should avoid fixing the container near any heat source.

### Barrel blocks and trigger guards

Devices such as barrel blocks and trigger guards may provide extra security but not as an alternative to the above.

### Transporting Firearms

When firearms are being transported, the certificate holder **must take reasonable precautions to make sure that the firearm, ammunition or shotgun is kept safe.**

If you do not transport firearms and ammunition very often, you should not normally need to have a security device fitted in the vehicle.

If your vehicle is left unattended at any time, it is normally safe enough to remove some essential component (where possible) and keep it in your personal possession; for example the bolt from a rifle or the fore-end from a shotgun.

Where practicable, firearms and ammunition should be placed where they cannot be seen, eg inside the load carrying area of a locked vehicle.

If you frequently transport large quantities of firearms by car and they are often left in circumstances where they may be vulnerable to thieves, you need a higher level of security. You could, for example, keep them in a secured metal container in the boot. A car alarm and immobiliser will provide extra security.

If firearms are transported on public transport they should be covered in a suitable slip/case and remain with the holder at all times, except when carried on an aircraft, for example.

## Other Important Points

The security measures you take should be reasonable, realistic and appropriate considering the risk involved. **You should not take these measures on their own.** The security of the house and vehicle in which the firearms will be kept or transported is just as important.

This leaflet only offers general advice. Your local police will consider each case individually, and must look at the overall security in the light of the circumstances in each case. You can contact your police firearms licensing department via the headquarters of your local police force. Further advice can be found in 'Firearms Law - Guidance to the Police' and the 'Firearms Security Handbook'. These documents are available on the Home Office website at **[www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)**.

Published by Home Office Communication Directorate  
April 2005

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