



Rifle training in the context of polar bear protection

Introduction

This document details the common standards and minimum requirements for rifle training in the context of polar bear protection agreed upon by the following institutions: Alfred Wegener Institute, Institute of Geophysics, Polish Academy of Sciences, Korea Polar Research Institute, Norwegian Polar Institute, The University Centre in Svalbard, and Kings Bay AS.

A person trained at any of these institutions can borrow a rifle from any of the other institutions, subject to the person (1) showing certification of passing the course, (2) having a brief introduction to the institution's weapons and the institution's definition of 'high preparedness' in terms of when to half-load, and (3) any specific legal or formal requirements of the institution.

Course requirements

This rifle training is typically conducted along with a polar bear protection course, unless the trainer deems this unnecessary. The polar bear protection course provides a general introduction to polar bears, precautions and how to act during encounters.

The training is done with bolt action rifles, caliber 30-06 or .308.

The rifle course is valid for a maximum of 36 months.

Attachment 1 presents the common standards for how to half-load and load rifles with fixed magazines versus detachable box magazines. As the different institutions lend out rifles with different magazine types, the brief introduction prior to lending a weapon out will always include information on the procedures relevant to the specific rifle being loaned.

Course content

The course covers basic rifle handling skills and safety procedures related to rifle handling. The most essential part of the course is demonstrating safe handling of the rifle in the *buddy principle* context.

Handling procedures, most importantly half-loading and unloading, are trained with dummy ammunition.

The participants should complete as a minimum fire 16 live rounds during the course from (at least) a kneeling and standing position. Physical factors might however limit the possibility to achieve this goal.

The participants also train how to use flare gun to scare off polar bears as a backup option.

Knowledge goals:

- Understand the general safety regulations for safe rifle handling on the rifle range, in settlements, buildings, during fieldwork and on private outings in the Svalbard context,

- Have insight into local, official, relevant legislation that covers acquirement, storing and handling of firearms, and of firearms in the context of protection against polar bears,
- Understand and be able to explain how the bolt action rifle works,
- Know the names and function of the main parts of the rifle,
- Know and understand the meaning of the different orders and commands used at the rifle-range.
- Explain the difference between training ammunition (full metal jacket) and hunting ammunition (expanding ammunition) and understand the importance of correct, good quality ammunition for polar bear protection,
- Understand 'half-loading' procedures and demonstrate practical application,
- Know how to correctly receive, half-load and load, carry, unload, and hand-over a rifle,
- Understand and explain the *buddy principle* in all rifle handling operations,
- Understand what a safe background means and the range of 30-06 / .308 bullet,
- Know the consequences of cold weather, changing temperatures and humidity for rifle function,
- Explain how and at what distance the flare gun works best as a deterrent and as a tool for signaling.

Skills goals:

- As an individual, and as a buddy, perform a correct half loading and emptying procedure,
- Perform safe rifle handling in all parts of the training at the rifle range,
- Accomplish shooting from the following positions:
 - o Kneeling position
 - o Standing position
- From a kneeling or standing position, without time limit, hit within a target of 40cm in diameter, at 35m distance with four (4) out of four (4) rounds,,
- Use hearing protection correctly,
- Demonstrate correct use of the flare gun,
- Demonstrate correct, daily maintenance of a rifle and flare gun.

Demonstrate how to fix the most common malfunctions with a bolt action rifle.

General competence goals:

- Operate as a buddy pair when handling a rifle,
- Understand that a rifle always should be considered as a deadly weapon.

Assessment:

To pass the course the participants need to:

1. Without time limit, hit within a target of 40cm in diameter, at 35m distance with four (4) out of four (4) rounds,
2. Demonstrate safe rifle handling during all parts of the rifle training course.