

FIREARM SECURITY

This leaflet gives advice on the levels of security required for section 1 firearms, section 1 ammunition, and shot guns.

(“FIREARMS” MEANS BOTH SECTION 1 FIREARMS AND SHOT GUNS)

1 What does the law Require?

Under the Firearms Rules 1989, a prescribed safekeeping condition is attached to all firearm and shot gun certificates. It is an offence not to meet a condition of a certificate. The maximum penalty for this offence can be up to 6 months in prison, or a fine, or both.

The safekeeping condition attached to a firearms certificate requires that the firearms(s) and ammunition that the certificate is for **must be stored securely to prevent, as far as is reasonably practicable, unauthorised people taking or using them.** When a firearm or ammunition is being used, or the holder has the firearm with him while it is being cleaned, repaired, or tested, or for some other purpose connected with its use, transfer or sale, or if the firearms or ammunition is being transported, or for any other such purpose, the condition requires that **reasonable precautions must be taken for the safe custody of the firearms(s) and the ammunition.**

The same condition applies to shot, gun certificates. The only difference is that **the condition does not apply to the ammunition for a shot gun.** However, as a matter of common sense, shot gun ammunition should also be stored securely and you should take reasonable precautions for its safe custody.

YOUR LOCAL POLICE CAN GIVE YOU ADVICE ON SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS.

2 What is ‘Secure Storage’?

The Firearms Rules do not prescribe how firearms must be kept securely. The Home Departments’ guidance 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 in a safe. In these cases you should then lock away the rest of the firearm. A securely built gun room or cellar with a steel door that locks can also be an acceptable form of secure storage. Store section 1 ammunition in a separate secure compartment within a gun cabinet or in its own secure container. When considering whether storage arrangements are secure enough, **a chief officer must 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 and the vehicle in which they are transported.**

3 What Types of Security are available?

Perhaps the most important time when both you and the police will need to consider your plans for security arrangements is when you first apply for a firearm or shot gun certificate. A police officer may ask you about your security or your storage arrangements before you are granted a certificate. The officer will be able to give you advice about security and crime prevention. More information about the various types of security which may be needed to meet three safe keeping condition, and what these involve, is given below. You can choose the security arrangements which suit your circumstances best. **But remember that the question of whether your arrangements are satisfactory may depend not only what the firearms are stored in, but also on the overall security of the property where the firearms are kept.**

Gun Cabinets

As manufactured firearm cabinets are widely available, this will probably be the preferred method of security for most people.

There is now a British Standard for gun cabinets. The Standard recommends that before you buy a cabinet, you should ask the manufacturer to show you a test certificate from an independent testing organisation to confirm that the cabinet has been tested to an approved standard for resistance to attack. **But it is not compulsory to have a cabinet which meets the British Standard, and having such a cabinet does not necessarily guarantee that you are meeting the safekeeping condition.**

The Home Departments recommend that a cabinet should have the following features:

- It should be made from sheet steel at least 14 swg (2mm) thick. All seams need to be continuously welded, or the seams should be of bend construction.
- All hinges should be fixed inside the cabinet, or hinge bolts or bars should be provided.
- Lock mechanisms should be on the inside of the cabinet. The lock should contain at least 5 levers to BS3621 standard. Alternatively quality hardened padlocks and staples should be fitted to the cabinet.
- Because of their height, rifle 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 which you can use to store hand guns or firing mechanisms that have been removed from other firearms.

Gun Clamps

If you have one firearm, an alternative option to a cabinet may be a device called a gun clamp. These should:

- be made out of steel that is at least 14 swg (2mm) thick;
- have seam-welded joints, or joints that are of bend construction;
- have a 5 lever mortice lock that meets BS 3621 standard

Steel Cables

For certain firearms kept for display purposes only, a high tensile steel cable secured with a hardened padlock may be an appropriate security method.

ADVICE ON WHERE TO PLACE AND HOW TO INSTALL GUN CABINETS, GUN CLAMPS AND STEEL CABLES

A gun cabinet, container for section 1 ammunition, gun clamp or steel cable should be securely fixed to the fabric of the building where it is situated.

The Home Departments advise that:

- 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.
- Wherever possible, it should be fixed to a wall that is built from bricks, concrete blocks or reinforced concrete.
- 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 not put the container near central heading ducts or chimney stacks; heat or fire can affect materials, particularly ammunition.

Barrel Blocks and Trigger Guards

Devices such as barrel blocks and trigger guards may provide extra security but never use them **Instead of** the types of security mentioned in section 2 above.

4 Transporting Firearms

When firearms are being transported, the certificate holder **must take reasonable precautions to make sure that the firearm, ammunition or shot gun is kept safe.** When you are making arrangements you should look at the circumstances in which the firearms are being transported.

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 of the firearm and keep it in your personal possession; for example the bolt from a rifle or the fore-end from a shot gun.

Where practicable, firearms and ammunition should be placed where they cannot be seen, inside the locked vehicle.

If you frequently transport large quantities of firearms by car and they are often left in circumstances where 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 may 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, for example, when carried as cargo in the hold of an aircraft.

5 Other Important Points

The security measures you take should be reasonable, realistic, and appropriate considering the risk involved. **But 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. You can get advice on how to protect buildings and vehicles and on how to fit alarms from your local police station.

This leaflet only offers general advice and it is important to remember that your local chief officer of police must consider each case individually, and must look at **overall suitability of the security in the light of the circumstances in each case.**