

Personal and Facility Hygiene for Shooting Ranges and Shooting Sports



Range Hygiene

Maintaining good personal and facility hygiene and following safety procedures when participating in shooting sports activities is important for you and your health.



Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies



Noise:

While on a shooting range, you should wear hearing protection regardless of whether you are actually shooting or just observing. It is a requirement, while at MDIFW-owned ranges, once you are inside the firing bay fence, when any shooting is occurring.

The CDC advises that hearing loss can result from exposures to loud sounds. Generally speaking, the louder the sound, the shorter the amount of time it takes for hearing loss to occur. The longer the exposure, the greater the risk for hearing loss (especially when hearing protection is not used or there is not enough time for the ears to rest between exposures). It is recognized that hearing damage and loss can occur when exposed to noises above 80 dBA for more than two hours. Typical noise caused by firearms ranges from 140 dBA to 175 dBA at the muzzle.

Protecting your hearing with one of following types of hearing protection will benefit you for years to come:

- Simple foam inserts (when worn correctly) will work well in most cases and have a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) somewhere between 25 and 32 decibels. These are often sold in bulk packs and can be as cheap as \$20.00 for 100 pairs. At MDIFW ranges, we have them available if you happen to leave your other devices at home.
- Hard shell hearing protection. These devices range in quality and price, typically the better-quality versions with added comfort features are higher cost. These devices have a NRR ranging from 20 dB to 32dB. Hard shell hearing protection can serve you a long time and are easier to keep track of than foam inserts, however, they can get hot, can be a little uncomfortable when you are wearing them a long time, and version with larger cups may require some repositioning to get a proper check weld on stocks.
- Electronic hearing protection are devices that either allow passive or amplified hearing for normal ambient noise, however, these devices electronically “shut down” or provide noise reduction on the receipt of loud noises (typically anything or 80 dB) and then returning to normal hearing after the gunshot or damaging noise has ended. These can be an outstanding option but are also more expensive. Electronic hearing devices come in both the insert-type and hard-shell type.
- If you are planning a lengthy time frame on the range, it may be best to use a combination of hearing protection, by using a device that inserts into the ear, with a shell-type over top to provide added noise reduction.

Personal and Facility Hygiene for Shooting Ranges and Shooting Sports



Flying Object Hazards:

At shooting facilities, there are many potentials for flying object hazards. The most common of which is ammunition casings being ejected from firearms. When visiting a shooting range, it is important to wear protective eyewear. This can be as simple as a pair of clear safety glasses. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) estimates that wearing protective eyewear can reduce injuries by up to 90%. If you wear prescription glasses (provided they were made after 1971), your glasses should protect your eyes from common flying hazards at shooting ranges. However, there are options for more protective version to fit over your glasses. At MDIFW-run ranges, eye protection is mandatory once you are within the fenced area of the shooting bays.



Lead:

When visiting a shooting facility or handling firearms and ammunitions, you are potentially exposing yourself to lead, lead dust, or unburned gunpowder particles. These particles can be deposited on your skin, hair and clothing. This is true whether you are actually shooting the firearm or just observing nearby. For these reasons at MDIFW-run ranges, we do not allow food, drink, smokeless tobacco, or smoking inside the fenced area of the range. There are some good hygiene practices that can help to greatly reduce or eliminate your risk of exposure to these particles.

- Washing your face, hands, and arms before you eat drink or smoke is advisable.
- Use a soap or treated wipes that are designed to remove lead and other heavy metals from your skin, when you are done shooting or handling firearms. At MDIFW ranges, we provide a brand called D-wipes that we encourage you to use before leaving the range.
- It is recommended that the clothes that you use on the range should be washed after leaving the range and separated from other clothing.
- Don't dig into firing berms to retrieve spent ammunition. Most shooting facilities, including MDIFW ranges, prohibit this activity but it is wise to avoid this activity.



Trash:

Keeping shooting facilities clean and free of debris not only ensures that the range is safer for users, but also maintains an inviting facility for others to enjoy. Spent ammunition cases, ammunition boxes, and other refuse can be potential hazards for slips, trips and falls. Thumbtacks or staples used to hang targets can lead to cuts and scratches. Whether it is a requirement of a particular shooting facility or not, please follow the adage "Bring it in, Bring it out".