

Unloading Table Etiquette

The following document represents a consolidation of comments around unloading table etiquette on the Carolina Wire on the Carolina Cowboys web site. Red Cent was the facilitator of this discussion. This obviously reflects the preferences and experiences of the cowboys/cowgirls of the local clubs in the Carolinas that contributed to this discussion.

Just as a level set for the following unloading table etiquette guidelines, the following description of the loading/unloading table officer duties as described in the SASS RO I manual is included. Unloading table etiquette guidelines are not intended to interfere with any of the Unloading Table Officers (UTO) responsibilities which are primarily focused on safety but rather to enhance the official duties and make the loading/unloading table process more consistent and both UTO and shooter friendly. Remember that the unloading table procedures are a very key component of the safety considerations of a SASS match. From an unloading table perspective, the unloading table process is a mandatory match function, which is key to ensuring that all guns have been returned to an unloaded and safe condition. All match officials should consider the UTO as the most important stage officer function in a match as the UTOs are the ones that assure that no one is walking around with loaded guns.

Loading/Unloading Table Officers

- A) Loading Table Officers are responsible to visually check to ensure all firearms are loaded with only the correct number of rounds required in a course of fire. They count, along with the shooter, rounds being loaded into rifles and revolvers.
- B) They check to make sure no round is ever under the firing pin of any revolver.
- C) The Loading Table is also a good place for the Loading Officer to observe the shooter's equipment, especially his firearms, inspecting for illegal modifications. A comment from the Loading Officer may save the shooter an embarrassing disqualification at the shooting line. Any illegal external modifications encountered at the loading table should be brought to the shooter's attention and corrected prior to shooting, if at all possible.
- D) It is good practice for the Loading Officer to ask the shooter if he understands the stage. Explanations at the Loading Table avoid these questions being addressed at the line by the Timer Operator and prevent unnecessary delays.
- E) These officers ensure safe muzzle direction is strictly observed and enforced when a competitor is at a Loading or Unloading Table, as well as during movement to and from the Loading or Unloading Table.
- F) At the Unloading Table, competitors shall unload each of their firearms, and the Unloading Officer must visually inspect all chambers to make sure they are empty. Rifles and shotguns are cycled to verify their magazines are empty. All revolvers taken to the firing line must be checked, whether or not they were used, and only two main match revolvers may be taken to the line.
- G) Never allow a competitor to leave the loading table with a loaded firearm unless they are going to the firing line.

Remember: The primary responsibility always rests with the competitor. Shooters should always know the condition of their firearms and should never depend upon the Loading and Unloading Officers to ensure their firearms are correctly loaded and unloaded. The Loading and Unloading Officers are simply an added measure of safety. A competitor *may never* blame the Loading Officer for an incorrectly loaded firearm, and at no time will this claim be considered grounds for dismissal of penalties.

Unloading Table Etiquette Guidelines

The following guidelines are intended to help shooters understand the critical nature of the unloading table process. The responsibility of the Unloading Table Officer (UTO) is to make sure that all guns are returned to an unloaded and safe condition before they leave the unloading table. This is key to the safety record of this shooting sport – getting someone hurt or even killed because guns were not properly cleared is not something any of us want to experience. You will find some UTOs are much more rigorous than others in how they verify the guns are unloaded – that is their choice and it is to be respected.

- Watch the muzzle of your guns when going to the unloading table and putting them on the unloading table. When you remove your pistols from your holsters, keep the muzzles pointed across the unloading table – same direction as the long guns. For the cross draw folks, do the dance.
- If in the process of verifying that the guns are unloaded, a safety condition is observed by the UTO, it is their responsibility to make sure the Posse Marshall (PM) and/or timer operator are notified so that the appropriate penalty is assessed. Do not blame the UTO – they are doing their job.
- When showing the UTO your pistol cylinder is empty, spinning the cylinder at a high rate to demonstrate how smooth your actions are does not help this process. Rotate the cylinders at a rate that they can see the empty cylinders. It also helps if you do so with the gun angled so they can see the open cylinders. When you have cleared a pistol and you are holstering it, watch your muzzle. For the cross draw folks, do the dance. The UTO does not like to be swept even if he has verified you are clear.
- Simply working the lever does not satisfy all UTOs on your rifles. It is better to angle the rifle so the UTO can look down in the carrier area when you slowly lever the gun. The UTO may want to visually see the end of the follower to verify nothing could possibly be in the loading tube. As a shooter, you could also do this visual check when you lever the rifle for your own peace of mind. The Marlin follower tip typically has a distinct reddish orange color and the 73 is easy to see also. In fact some shooters put color on the 73 follower so it is easier to

see. If the UTO insists on seeing the follower, then comply. The UTO is doing his/her job.

- If there is a gun malfunction on the shooting line, the gun will be brought to the unloading table by someone other than the shooter. The gun must remain at the unloading table until it can be made safe (unloaded). The UTO is not expected to be responsible for performing any work on a gun malfunction unless they are requested to assist by the shooter. In fact it is better if the shooter and/or a designated assistant can take care of making the malfunction situation safe and allow the UTO to focus on other shooters coming to the unloading table while the malfunction is addressed. But the UTO does need to make sure that the gun is returned to an unloaded and safe condition unless special considerations are granted by the RO before it is removed from the unloading table.
- If you as a shooter experience a gun malfunction, make sure that when you arrive at the unloading table that you have all of your working guns cleared by the UTO before you address the gun malfunction. It is very easy to get involved with working to address the gun malfunction and forget to clear your other guns. It is a safety violation to leave the unloading table with guns that have not been cleared by the UTO.

Remember folks; Respect the need for the unloading table process. Allow the UTO to do their job correctly. It is critical to the continued safety of our sport.

A couple of notes for UTOs:

First, do not handle guns of the shooters at the unloading table without asking the owners permission. You have the authority to do so but many shooters do not like someone else handling their guns. If you have a particular gun condition you think needs some attention, see if the shooter can verify the situation themselves first.

Second, if you are the UTO and you need to get prepared to load, make sure you round up a new UTO to replace you. If you cannot find a volunteer, let the Posse Marshall and/person running the timer know that they need to find a replacement.