



United States Department of the Interior



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In Reply Refer To:
1112 (950) I

Instruction Memorandum No. AK-2014-008
Expires: 09/30/2015

To: All Employees

From: State Director

Subject: Firearms Policy for Non-Law Enforcement Personnel

Program Area: Safety.

Purpose: This Instruction Memorandum (IM) establishes the requirements of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-Alaska relating to the on-the-job transport, possession, and use of firearms by non-law enforcement personnel. For the purposes of this IM, “personnel” refers to employees, volunteers, and directly supervised contract employees of the BLM-Alaska.

Policy: Non law-enforcement personnel may be authorized to transport, possess, or use a firearm while on official duty for purposes of protecting themselves from wild animals. Personnel must be individually and formally authorized to do so, and will strictly follow the training, safety, and operational requirements stated in Attachment 1, “Requirements Governing the Management and Use of Firearms by Non-Law Enforcement Personnel.”

Please note that this policy also addresses the requirements for storing and managing non-law enforcement firearms.

Timeframe: Effective immediately.

Budget Impact: Annually recurring direct costs include the purchase of ammunition for training and the cost of range fees for completing qualification live fire.

Background: A great deal of BLM-AK field work is performed in bear and/or moose habitat. The vast majority of encounters between our personnel and wild animals end without a serious incident occurring; the person and animal simply move away from one another. However, occasionally a bear or moose will behave very aggressively toward a human. When this occurs, the employee’s safety is seriously compromised because of the size, speed, and strength of these animals.

Due to the inherent danger of such confrontations, non-law enforcement personnel of the BLM-Alaska are allowed to carry a firearm while on official duty in the field. This ability to use firearms for self-defense has allowed employees to stop animal attacks on themselves and/or other employees in the past. In two instances such intervention clearly saved the life of the individuals being attacked.

Allowing non-law enforcement employees to carry firearms in the field is a very sensitive matter. Our non-law enforcement firearms program is the most extensive in the BLM, and is always subject to intense scrutiny by the public and by our own agency. Thoughtful selection of employees for authorization, highly professional training, accurate data collection, concern for the well-being of wildlife resources, and strict adherence to our firearms management requirements will all help to ensure that we continue to maintain the ability to authorize our employees to carry weapons in the field for protection against dangerous animals.

Coordination: This policy was coordinated with the BLM-Alaska State Safety Committee and incorporates the current guidance of the BLM-Alaska State Firearms Instructor and Bear-Human Conflict Working Groups.

Contacts: Questions about this policy may be directed to Jake Schlapfer, Alaska State Safety Manager, by telephone at 907-271-6370, or by e-mail at: jschlapf@blm.gov . Operational questions related to firearms instruction may be directed to Keith Genter at: 907-754-2214, or by e-mail at kgenter@blm.gov .

Signed by:
Bud Cribley
Alaska State Director

Authenticated by:
Anita R. Jette
Records Specialist

2 Attachments

- Requirements Governing the Management and Use of Firearms by Non-Law Enforcement Personnel (8 pp)
- State of Alaska Regulations for Taking Game in Defense of Life or Property (1 p)