

The Four “E” s of Range Development and Safety

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The only way to ensure safety on ranges is to follow the four “E”s: evaluate; engineer; educate; and enforce.

Evaluate (or Reevaluate)

Several questions can help you evaluate your range: What shooting activities would I like to conduct on my new range?; What shooting activities are being conducted on my existing range?; and Has the range been designed to accommodate this type of shooting activity safely?

Engineer

Once we have completed an evaluation, to ensure the safety of range users and the surrounding community, we must engineer or re-engineer our range to accommodate the intended shooting activities safely. Engineering is largely fact sensitive and site specific. An ongoing range maintenance plan also is a vital aspect of range safety; it is important to remember that engineering alone cannot make a range safe!

Educate

Continuing safety education is important for your employees, range users and range operators. Before you hire employees and range operators, you should determine what type of people will best benefit the range. You want to hire people with knowledge, skill and ability. Range personnel should be able to speak, read, write, understand and convey to others the language of the shooting sports, as well as range administration, management, operations and maintenance. Range operators can educate range users through formal training courses, range orientation, testing and signage. Education of your customers/users is critical to ensuring safety on the range. Remember to keep neat, accurate records of all range training.

Enforcement

Once range rules and regulations are developed, they must be enforced. Display all range rules prominently, and include a heading (range name, address and phone number), date (when rules were first established, reviewed and/or rewritten) and preamble (i.e., “These rules are established to enhance the safety and health of range supervisors, range users and the surrounding community”). Clearly define any terminology in the rules that may not be common or understood by everyone.

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Prioritize your rules and regulations. Gun-handling rules should be given first priority, because this is your area of high risk. Rules should include: keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction; keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot; and keep the firearm unloaded until you are ready to shoot.

Firing rules are second priority: know your target and what is beyond; make sure your gun is safe to operate; know how to use your gun safely; use the correct ammunition; wear eye and ear protection; never use alcohol or drugs before or during shooting; and store your guns safely.

Operational rules are third priority. They encompass all rules dealing with range operation, live firing, range use and range procedures, such as authorized ammunition, target specifications and shooting from firing line only.

The fourth priority is administrative rules, such as parking regulations, gate closure, trash policies and so forth.

Determine the most effective ways to disseminate your range rules. You may want to ask people to sign for a copy of the rules; this gives you an accurate record of who has received them. Consequences for violation of rules, including reprimands, dismissals and/or fines, should be stated clearly on your rule sheet and signage. State who has the authority to make and enforce range rules, and date all written rules. Again, it is vital to keep accurate records of your range rules and policies. If possible, rules should be reviewed consistently in a club or range newsletter.

Basic Range Management

When a range is not doing well, it usually can be attributed to a breakdown in one or more of the following seven management areas. We refer to the first four areas using the acronym PODS.

- *Plan. Planning is critical to range success. You will need to develop a master plan, site plan, maintenance plan, program plan, training plan, administrative plan, financial plan, tactical plan, strategic plan and five-year plan.*
- *Organization. Organize your staff, procedures, and facility support in terms of division of labor, finances, time, duties, capabilities and limitations.*
- *Direction. You must take charge, be responsible and make subordinates accountable.*
- *Supervision. Ensure that all staff and range users are acting with the highest degree of care. Direct supervision sometimes is necessary.*

We refer to the next three management areas as the Three Cs.

- *Communication. You need to communicate both verbally and in writing through reports, newsletters, regularly scheduled meetings.*
- *Coordination. Coordinate your range activities, personnel and uses.*
- *Cooperation. It is imperative to work with others and gain their cooperation. Without cooperation, other management concepts will be weak at best.*

It is important to remember that range safety is dependent largely upon how the range is being used. For the most part, there is no such thing as an all-purpose range. Range safety is not dependent upon design alone; consider the Four "E"s on every range to ensure the safety of staff and users.