
COSSA Safety Manual

CENTRAL OREGON SHOOTING SPORTS ASSOCIATION (COSSA)

Safety Manual

November 30, 2023

Range safety is everyone's responsibility. The most important goal of recreational shooting at COSSA Park is being safe.

COSSA firearm safety rules are provided to ensure that everyone at COSSA Park has a safe and enjoyable experience. COSSA Park is an unsupervised range and generally does not have a range safety officer on duty. The range safety burden falls on you as a COSSA member to work in cooperation with other shooters to adhere to the following basic safety requirements. Safety depends on you as the individual range user. Common sense and courtesy are the cornerstones of safe shooting. The key to the safe enjoyment of the shooting sports is a personal sense of responsibility not only for one's self but for the safety of all persons on the range

Additional guidelines on range usage and etiquette are covered in the *Member's Guide to Safety & Range Use* and is available on the COSSA website www.cossapark.com. The *Guide* should be consulted in conjunction with other posted safety guidelines

COSSA Park also is used by the COSSA Disciplines who focus on specific shooting activities. These Disciplines follow COSSA's Safety Manual and COSSA's Member's Guide along with their national affiliation guidelines. These Disciplines often expand upon COSSA's safety guidelines to accommodate the additional safe practices needed for their shooting activities. Similarly, outside events and trainers using COSSA Park have done the same. Anyone engaging in activities with COSSA Disciplines, trainers and outside events must follow all the COSSA requirements as a minimum. It is the responsibility of the management activity sponsor to communicate and enforce the required practices and for their participants to follow the additional safety requirements. Any substantial variations from established COSSA safety guidelines must be approved by the COSSA Exec

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Section 1 - Rules for Safe Gun Handling

The Fundamental Rules of Firearms Safety

1. ALWAYS treat every firearm as if it is loaded.

Whenever you see, touch or are handed a firearm, assume that it is loaded. If you pick up a firearm, always open the action and check its loaded or unloaded condition. Even if you have just seen it cleared by another person, do not accept it until you check and verify that it is unloaded. If you do not know how to unload and clear a firearm, do not touch it and get help from a person who does know.

2. ALWAYS keep the firearm pointed in a safe direction.

A safe direction means that the gun is pointed so that even if it were to go off it would not cause injury or damage. The key to this rule is to control where the muzzle (front end of the barrel) is pointed at all times. Common sense and good judgment dictate the safest direction, depending on different circumstances. For instance, a wall in a house is not a safe direction because a bullet can penetrate several walls. Pointing at the ground may be best, but a hard surface could result in a ricochet. It is up to the shooter to pick the direction with the least potential for any harm to life or property. Generally, firearms should be pointed at the range berms and never at another person.

3. ALWAYS keep your finger off the trigger and out of the trigger guard until ready to shoot.

When holding or handling a gun, straighten your trigger finger and consciously place it along the side of the gun. Until you are actually ready to fire, do not touch the trigger. When you are finished shooting, immediately place your finger outside the trigger guard.

4. ALWAYS be sure of your target and what is beyond.

Be absolutely sure you have identified your target beyond any doubt. Equally important, be aware of the area beyond your target. This

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means observing your prospective area of fire before you shoot. If your

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shot misses, where will the bullet go? A high-power rifle has a range of three miles, and a .22 rimfire rifle can shoot up to one and a half miles. Never fire in a direction where there are people or any potential for mishap. If you shoot over a hill, who is on the other side? Think first, shoot second.

Other Important Safety Rules

In addition to the following rules, many shooting activities require additional safety rules.
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1. ALWAYS keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.

Never transport a loaded firearm. You may have a loaded firearm for self-defense purposes. In that case, you must take special precautions to ensure safe carry and to restrict access by unauthorized persons.

2. Know how to operate and use the gun safely.

Before handling a firearm learn its mechanical and handling characteristics. Know how to safely load and unload it.

3. Do not rely on the gun's safety.

A safety is a mechanical device that can and does fail. Keeping the safety engaged until you are ready to fire is a safe gun handling practice, but it does not relieve you from following the Fundamental Rules of Firearms Safety.

4. Be sure the gun is safe to operate.

Unload the gun and visually check the interior of the barrel (bore) for obstructions like cleaning patches, mud/snow or insects. An obstructed bore may cause the gun to explode when fired and cause serious injury. If you are not sure if the gun is in safe condition, have it checked by a knowledgeable gunsmith.

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5. Use only the correct ammunition for the gun.

Do not shoot the gun unless you have the proper ammunition. Incorrect ammunition may cause the gun to malfunction or explode. Most guns have the proper ammunition type stamped on the barrel. Ammunition can be identified by information printed on its box and sometimes stamped on the base of the cartridge.

6. If your gun fails to fire when the trigger is pulled, handle with care.

Keep the muzzle pointed down-range (at the targets). Take your finger out of the trigger guard. The cartridge may be a “hang-fire” (delayed ignition), misfire or a “squib” (no or very small powder charge that fails to expel the bullet). Wait at least 30 seconds before opening the action. With the firearm unloaded and the action open, check the bore for obstructions. If the bore is obstructed, do not fire. Take your gun to a qualified gunsmith. Ask for help if you do not know what to do.

7. Wear eye and ear protection.

All persons on or near a firing line (or as designated by signage) must wear shooting glasses and hearing protection. This includes shooters, guests and spectators. Eye and ear protection is NOT OPTIONAL. The noise generated by all firearms, large and small, can cause irreversible hearing damage. Bullet fragments, hot gases, ejected cartridge casings and other debris can cause serious eye injury. Eye protection shall have ANSI Z87 shatter-resistant lenses.

NEVER:

- Accept a firearm from another person without personally checking that it is unloaded.
- Pull a firearm toward you by the muzzle.

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8. Never use alcohol or over-the-counter, prescription or other drugs that impair physical or mental ability before or while handling firearms or shooting.

Alcohol and many other drugs/medications impair physical coordination and good judgment all of which are critically important to safe gun handling and use.

9. Before cleaning and maintaining your firearm, be sure that it is unloaded.

Unload your gun and check it to be absolutely sure that it is unloaded. It is a good idea to look directly into the chamber and magazine, and then probe them with a finger to ensure they are unloaded.

10. Store guns and ammunition so that they are not accessible to unauthorized persons, both adults and children.

It is your personal responsibility to ensure that only trained, responsible persons have access to your firearms and ammunition. Access can be controlled by storing your arms in a locked container, secure closet/room or safe, and then restricting the keys or combination to trusted, responsible persons. "Trigger locks" and other devices that attach to the gun may fail and should never take the place of safe gun handling and observance of all safety rules.

Section 2 - Rules for Sharing and Using the Range

1. Firearms

At COSSA Park, restrictions on firearms and ammunition are minimal. Shooters may use any firearm they are legally allowed to possess that is serviceable and safe. Persons shooting fully automatic firearms or using suppressors must have the required legal documentation in their possession. Shooters using fully automatic firearms must notify other range users that auto fire is in use.

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2. Ammunition

Ammunition is restricted to that used in hunting and target shooting. Incendiary, exploding, or tracer ammunition are not allowed due to BLM restrictions as well as fire danger. Armor piercing, painted tip or steel or tungsten core ammunition is not allowed due to potential target damage and ricochet danger. .223 Green Tips are not allowed.

3. Targets

COSSA provides steel targets at some ranges open to recreational shooting. Buffalo Range targets are mild steel so jacketed bullets are not allowed. Shooters are welcome to provide their own paper targets using the wood target backing and target stands provided by COSSA. Shooters may also bring their own metal targets. The standard COSSA guidelines for metal targets will apply (100 yards for rifle caliber rounds and 10 yards for handgun caliber rounds) Used targets are a housekeeping issue so clean up after shooting is mandatory. *See more detail on Targets in Section 3 – Standard Procedures for All Ranges items 8, 9, 10 and 11.*

4. Dedication of Bays to Specific Uses

Shooting areas and bays are dedicated to certain types of activity.

For example, the COSSA Kids-Small-bore Range is restricted to .22 rimfire only. The Buffalo Range is restricted to unjacketed lead bullets only. Bay One is restricted to pistol caliber cartridges only. The Cowboy Action Bays 9-14 are restricted to pistol caliber unjacketed lead bullets or lead shot only. Events and matches may allow jacketed ammunition or steel shot in accordance with their discipline requirements.

Equipment positioned at shooting areas, including but not limited to shooting benches or movable targets, must not be moved from one bay or range to another.

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Because certain bays or ranges are dedicated to specific uses, there may be restrictions on firearms and ammunition.

COSSA's *Member's Guide to Safety & Range Use* details the appropriate use of all bays and ranges and should be reviewed in conjunction with the Safety Manual. This Guide is available on the COSSA website www.cossapark.com. Generally, there will be additional signage on restricted bays. Read and follow these posted guidelines.

5. Use of Fully Automatic Firearms and Suppressors

Fully automatic firearms are only allowed at the COSSA range on the Fockler Sight-in Range, and Bay 18. Submachine guns may be used on Bays 2-8. They are also allowed in any bay assigned to a special event. Fully automatic shooters are required to:

- Alert other range users that fully automatic firearms are in use and when they will commence.
- Maintain continuous supervision and control of any other persons using the firearm.
- Have immediate and personal possession of documentation showing that the automatic firearm is registered as required under federal law (ORS 166.272(3)).

Suppressors are allowed at the COSSA range. Shooters must have immediate and personal possession of documentation showing that the suppressor is registered as required under federal law (ORS 166.272(3)). Use of suppressors does not negate the use of hearing protection.

Section 3 – Standard Procedures for All Ranges

The following range rules apply to all COSSA ranges and property. Failure to comply with all rules and the lawful commands of club officials, range officers and activity or match directors may result in immediate expulsion from the range.

The safety rules and procedures of Disciplines conducting COSSA-approved competitions, practice, training events and other recognized activities will prevail during that event subject to approval by the COSSA Board.

- 1. Rules Observation** - All persons, both members and guests, must observe all laws, range rules and safety rules governing firearms ownership and proper usage. Each person must accept his or her personal obligation for acting in a safe and responsible manner.
- 2. Range Official Authority** - All persons must obey the lawful orders and commands of club officers, range monitors, range officials and range safety officers (RSO).
- 3. Responsibility of Guests** - Guests (4 per member) shall be aware of and observe the rules, safety procedures and range protocols and must be under the onsite presence of a member.
- 4. Responsibility for Minor Children** – COSSA members may bring up to Four (4) guests to the range. Each guest, over age 17, must pay a \$5.00 guest fee. Minor children (17 years of age or under), who are not shooting, shall be under the direct supervision and control of a responsible adult. An adult COSSA member must supervise shooters under 17 years of age. The supervising adult may not shoot while the child is shooting.
- 5. Eye and Ear Protection** - Eye and ear protection are required for all persons, shooters, guests and spectators on or near the firing line.
- 6. Lead Hazard Control** - All shooters, especially children, shall observe lead health hazard control by not eating or drinking on the firing line and thoroughly washing the hands and face around the mouth before eating or drinking.
- 7. Alcohol** - Consumption of alcoholic beverages or other

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substances at the COSSA facility that may impair physical coordination and/or judgment is strictly prohibited. An exception is made for consumption of alcohol after all shooting events and activities are closed for the day.

8. Use of Explosives Prohibited – The detonation of explosive substances is prohibited. Tannerite© or similar material and cannons with non-explosive projectiles may be used only with prior Board approval.

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9. Approved Targets – COSSA allows the use of paper, steel or clay targets. Bio-degradable clay targets may be used only on the shotgun ranges or at COSSA-approved events. Each shooter is responsible for properly policing and disposing of his or her targets in the proper receptacle. Commercial plastic targets are allowed.

10. Prohibited Targets - Trash, glass, fruits and vegetables, boxes, cans, exploding targets, propane tanks, tire rims, discarded electronic equipment or appliances, or other materials that would result in sharp edged fragments are NOT allowed as targets. Caution must be exercised when using steel-belted radial tires to anchor target stands. An unpredictable ricochet is possible. Large rocks must be removed from impact areas to reduce ricochet hazards.

11. Metal Targets - Privately-owned steel targets must be specifically designed and constructed for safe shooting use and be in a safe and functional condition. COSSA officials may disallow steel targets that are of a questionably safe design, construction and condition. Target faces that are bullet pocked, shot-through or distorted are not allowed. Steel targets must be positioned from the shooter at least **30 feet** for firearms using pistol caliber ammunition and for shotguns using lead shot and **100 yards** for firearms using rifle cartridges and shotgun slugs.

12. Defective or DUD Ammunition – Place defective ammunition in the receptacles provided for that purpose. Do not put unfired or dud rounds in the trash containers.

Explanation of Terms

1. Cold Range - COSSA Park is a COLD range. COLD Range means that firearms must be unloaded, the action or cylinder open, and the magazine removed (if applicable) at all times except when on designated firing lines and ready to fire. **All firearms brought onto COSSA Park must be cased or holstered and unloaded (except for concealed weapon licensees and law enforcement) and may only be brought to and from the firing line when the range is “Hot”.**

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The following exceptions to Cold Range apply:

a. Law enforcement officers training at COSSA facilities may carry loaded firearms as required by their agency's written procedures. Such firearms must be properly holstered or otherwise secured and may not be handled except in accordance with written agency procedures.

b. Properly licensed persons may carry concealed firearms, but the firearm should not be visible or visually detectable. Firearms carried under this exception can only be handled in compliance with all COSSA range safety rules. NOTE: Organized activities, such as Discipline events, usually prohibit the carrying of loaded firearms unless the person participating in the event is engaging a course of fire etc. Persons possessing a loaded firearm outside of the rules for the event may be subject to disqualification and expulsion from the event and the COSSA facility.

2. Loaded Firearm - A firearm shall be loaded ONLY on the firing line, pointing down range (at the targets), and the firing line has been declared HOT or open for firing. **Firearms shall not be loaded or unloaded any place other than a HOT firing line or at designated loading or unloading areas adjacent to the firing line. A shooter's vehicle is not an acceptable location to load a firearm.**

3. Unloaded Firearm – Unloaded firearm means action or cylinder open, chamber(s) empty, magazine removed (if applicable), and muzzle (the forward “business” end of the barrel) pointed in **down-range**, or stored in a case. **Even in an unloaded condition, a firearm should never be considered “safe”.**

Specifically:	Bolt action	Bolt back and open
	Pump action	Bolt back; ejection port open
	Semi-auto	Bolt back; ejection port open
	Lever action	Bolt back; breech open
	Single shot	Breech block open
	DA revolver	Cylinder open
	SA revolver	Loading gate open
	Semi-auto pistol	Slide back; ejection port open

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Muzzle-Loader

No load; no cap; no powder in
pan

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4. **Unattended Firearm** - No firearm shall be left unattended unless it is unloaded and cased, or unloaded with the action or cylinder open and the magazine removed (if applicable).
5. **Muzzle** – The forward end of the barrel.
6. **Safe Direction** - Every shooter is responsible for ensuring that muzzle of the firearm does NOT point at or sweep any person at any time. Uncased firearms handled behind the firing line shall be carried with the **MUZZLE UP**.
7. **Hot Firing Line** - A HOT firing line means that no persons are forward of the firing line, and the range is clear for handling of firearms and shooting. While the range is HOT, all persons must remain behind the firing line whether anyone is shooting or not. Spectators must remain behind the shooters.
8. **Cold Firing Line** - A COLD firing line means that a cease-fire has been called and persons are allowed forward of the firing line for the purpose of scoring, posting or removing targets, recovering fired brass, setting up, taking down or repairing targets or chronograph equipment, or other related activities. **Firearms may not be handled for any purpose while persons are down range. All firearms must be unloaded, benched with muzzles down-range, actions open and magazines (if applicable) removed.**
9. **Up-Range** – “Up-Range” refers to the area to the rear of the shooter. (Example: Do not allow the muzzle to point up-range.)
10. **Down-Range** – “Down-Range” refers to the area in front of the shooter: toward the target and beyond. (Example: Keep the muzzle pointing down-range at all times.)
11. **Small-Bore** – Generally .22 rimfire caliber and below.

Section 4 - Standard Range Safety Procedures

COSSA Park has three general types of firing ranges.

- Type 1 is the traditional “target” range that has a common, established firing line and typically accommodates multiple shooters. The Fockler Sight-in Range (200-500 Yard Sight-In) and Bays 1 & 18) are examples of Type 1 ranges.
- Type 2 ranges are typified by the Practical Bays 2-8 and the Cowboy Bays 9-14. These ranges do not have an established firing line. Target positions and firing points may vary. Shooters using a bay in this configuration are typically affiliated with one another and have a designated range officer.
- Type 3 ranges are the Nosler Range, the West Range, and the Shotgun Range. These ranges are not open for general use.

ALL ranges operate under the rules in *Section 3 – Standard Range Procedures*. However, some specific safety procedures differ between Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3 ranges.

COSSA general range rules apply at all COSSA ranges. However, there are additional procedures applicable to the range type you are shooting on.

TYPE 1 Range Safety Procedures (Examples: Fockler Sight-in Range, the Gong Range and Bays 1 and 18)

Type 1 is the traditional “target” range that has a common, established firing line and typically will accommodate multiple shooters.

General Rule: When the range is declared COLD (Red Flag posted forward of the firing line) on a Type 1 range, all firearms must be unloaded, benched with muzzles down-range, actions open and magazines (if applicable) removed.

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All persons must stand behind the benches *or behind the yellow line if one is provided.* and not approach them. Ammunition may be handled and magazines loaded anywhere provided it is not done at the bench. Of course, on a HOT firing line, ammunition may be handled and magazines loaded anywhere.

- 1. Handling Firearms on a Cold Firing Line is Prohibited.** During a COLD firing line, all handling of firearms (including casing uncasing, set-up and removal) is prohibited. This prohibition includes handling firearms in a personal vehicle.
- 2. Handling Ammunition and Magazines on a Cold Firing Line**
During a COLD firing line, ammunition and unloaded or loaded detachable magazines may be handled anywhere behind the firing line and well away from the benches.
- 3. Firearms may be loaded ONLY on a Hot Firing Line (Red Flag posted on the firing line and NOT FORWARD of the firing line).**
- 4. Remain Behind Bench or Firing Line** - No person shall be at, near or approach a shooting bench or in front of the yellow firing line during a COLD firing line. All persons not moving down-range to set targets shall remain behind the firing line and all firing points or benches.
- 5. Declaring the Firing Line Hot or Cold** - It is every shooter's responsibility to communicate and cooperate on HOT and COLD firing line requirements. Shooters must work together to designate one person to declare the firing line HOT or COLD.
- 6. Bringing Rifles and Shotguns to or from the Firing Line** – Rifles and shotguns can only be brought to or removed from the firing line only during times that the firing line is in HOT condition. Rifles and shotguns brought to or removed from the firing line must be in unloaded condition and encased. The firearm shall be immediately benched with the muzzle pointed down-range.

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7. Bringing Handguns to or from the Firing Line - Handguns shall be carried to or from the firing line in unloaded condition and cased in a soft or hard pistol case/bag, holster or another appropriate container. The cylinder or loading gate of a revolver and the slide of a semi-auto pistol may be closed while cased or holstered. Handguns may not be carried to or from the firing line in the hand.

8. Drawing of a handgun from the holster is NOT permitted on Type 1 ranges.

9. Posting the Red Flag - *On Type 1 Ranges, including* the Fockler Sight-in Range, the Gong Range and Bays 1 and 18, a red flag shall be posted during a Cold Range before any person moves down range to set targets, score targets, clean-up debris or any other purpose. The red flag shall be posted on the firing line when all persons have returned from down range to the firing line and a hot range is in effect. This rule may also be extended to other ranges, so please be aware.

10. Muzzles Must Be Pointed Down-Range at all times while shooting.

11. Fired Rounds Must Impact Berms - All rounds fired must hit the impact berms, the range surface area surrounded by the berms, or the designated backstop area (i.e. long-range rifle ranges). Under no circumstances should targets be placed on top of the berms. Intentionally shooting over the berm or shooting in the air at thrown targets is prohibited. Unseen persons could be down-range. Metal targets must be positioned and/or angled to minimize the risk of bullet or fragment escape from the range/bay.

12. Cease-Fire - Cease-fire means that all shooters shall immediately stop firing, take the finger out of the trigger guard, keep the firearm pointed down-range and stand-by for instructions. Anyone may call a cease-fire if that person perceives an unsafe condition or if it is necessary to service the targets after a hot range is in force. All shooters are required to abide by the cease-fire without delay.

Type 2 Range Safety Procedures (Examples: Practical Bays 2-8 and Cowboy Bays 9-14)

These ranges do not have an established firing line. Target positions and firing points may vary. Shooters using a bay in this configuration are typically affiliated with one another. Shooters must designate one of their group as the range officer.

General rule: When the range is declared COLD, all firearms must be unloaded, the action or cylinder open, the magazine removed (if applicable) and pointed down range.

- 1. Holstered Handguns** - Holstered handguns can be carried only if unloaded with the action closed, hammer or internal striker down and no magazine (loaded or unloaded) in the magazine well. Exception: Shooters who are actively training on these ranges may carry loaded firearms during the course of this training. When the training ceases, firearms shall be unloaded.
- 2. Ammunition and dummy rounds-** Ammunition may be handled and magazines (detachable/removable) and revolver speed-loaders may be loaded anywhere except at a Safety Area.
- 3. Magazines or Speed-Loaders** - Ammunition may be handled, and magazines (detachable/removable) and revolver speed-loaders may be loaded anywhere except at a firing line bench during a Cold Firing line.
- 4. Drawing a handgun** from the holster is permitted under the following conditions:
 - a. The handgun should only be loaded on a Hot Firing Line.
 - b. Proper and safe draw techniques are required. The trigger finger must remain outside the trigger guard at all times until the muzzle is pointed at the target, and as the handgun is re-holstered. During the draw and re-holstering the muzzle must never point at any part of the shooter's body or at another person. A person, who cannot to demonstrate these safety requirements, should not draw from a holster in live-fire practice.

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c. In groups of two or more persons, only one person at a time may draw and fire live ammunition. Another member of the group must monitor the shooter to ensure that the handgun is unloaded and holstered or cased before declaring the range COLD.

Type 3 Range Safety Procedures (Example: Nosler Range, the West Range, and Shotgun Range)

- 1. The Nosler High Power Range is always closed for recreational use.**
- 2. The West Range is open by special approval from the Board. COSSA safety rules apply.**
- 3. Shotgun Range. This range is limited to use of shotguns and shot only. COSSA Park firearm safety rules are always in effect.**
 - Shotguns brought to or removed from the firing line must be in an unloaded condition and encased. The shotgun must be immediately benched with the muzzle pointed down-range and the action open.
 - COSSA manual throwers are set up in fixed positions and are not to be moved. Care should be exercised to not impact Bay 18.
 - Use of personal throwers is allowed. An area east of the existing four COSSA throwers been designated for setting up personal throwers. Personal throwers can **only** be used in this area and is signposted accordingly. Care must be exercised in positioning so as to not impact other shotgun shooters in the neighboring positions to the west. No birds are to be flown over the roads to the south.

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- The COSSA manual throwers use a strong spring; Care should be exercised when cocking the throwing arm and the possibility of a premature release.
- Shooters should take care of where the person operating the trap is positioned.
- All 4 COSSA throwers can be used simultaneously by separate groups. It would be appropriate to liaise with the other groups before shooting to make sure everyone is aware of your presence.
- Typically, there is no reason to go down range at the shotgun range. If the need arises and there are other shotgun shooters, coordinate calling of a cold range.
- Never leave the thrower cocked and locked when you depart the shotgun range.

(End)