

WORLD WAR II LIVING HISTORY ASSOCIATION SAFETY GUIDELINES

PREFACE

In 1987 a few select World War II units began participating in Living History Association (LHA) Time Line Events with the many other time period units represented in the membership of the LHA. From 1990 to 1992 World War II reenactment units and military vehicle enthusiasts created their own event on a site rented by the LHA for that purpose. By 1990 these groups were in the process of forming an official LHA World War II Committee to continue these activities. Sets of authenticity guidelines were drawn up and safety guidelines were also discussed with some thoughts finally being put on paper in 1993 by Mr. Earl F. Leavitt, Officer D'Liason FFI. His comments were most welcomed and some of his suggestions (particularly those dealing with public demonstrations) continue to remain as part of this document. His opening letter to the committee in 1993 is given here as a reminder of how far we have come and of the always present need for safety vigilance. This is what he said:

“These guidelines are applicable to both public presentations and closed tactical type events. Parts of these guidelines may seem to be presenting rules that have no direct bearing on the safety issue, but in June of 1992 I experienced a breach of safety that should serve to illustrate the reasoning behind this manual.

At the LHA sponsored 1992 World War II & Motor Vehicle Rally I observed a “soldier” (who was not a member of any of the organized units in attendance) hand a loaded semi-automatic pistol to a child of about ten years of age. The youngster was not accompanied by an adult, but quickly wheeled about to show his family what he was holding. In so doing he leveled the muzzle at live people at a distance of no more than three feet. Had the gun discharged serious injury would have resulted, even with blank ammunition. The person who had handed the gun to this child finally guided him in a safer direction at which time he allowed the boy to fire the pistol without benefit of any instruction. The owner of the pistol, at my insistence then removed the gun from the boy’s possession and actually had the weapon pointed at himself at one point in doing so.

Since safety is a perpetual concern of all who are serious about this hobby, I have taken it upon myself to submit these proposals not only to the Living History Association (LHA) World War II Committee, but to other recognized cover organizations in hopes of increasing the feedback necessary to any workable set of guidelines. I welcome any and all comment.”

Since Earl’s letter in 1993 others have worked to provide an ever growing working knowledge and manual to keep LHA World War II Committee events as safe as possible. A few of the notable World War II people have been Frank Sorento, Vincent Milano, Mike Heenan, Paul Levasseur, and from the LHA-HQ James Dassatti. This manual represents the most updated version of that continuing effort.

For Safety In Reenacting,

Steven Kapotas
Chairman,
LHA World War II Committee

INTRODUCTION

The “general premise” of these rules is to create a safe reenacting environment for both the reenactor in closed tactical and/or public events and especially for the public during display shows. As reenactors we have a responsibility to be as authentic in our appearance as possible so that we can properly educate others about World War II history, but we also have a responsibility to perform our activities as safely as possible. An injury of any sort casts the worst possible cloud, not only on the World War II Reenacting Community but also on the whole of reenacting. Earl Leavitt saw this in 1993 when he suggested a number of rules to tighten up LHA Safety after observing a potentially hazardous situation. Since that time several LHA members have worked on these and other safety rules, a final compilation of which are offered here for this time period. Other LHA Safety Rules for a variety of time periods are available at the LHA web site at www.livinghistoryassn.org.

All LHA events will have an appointed safety officer who will have the ability to dismiss units from participation if they or their equipment is deemed to be unsafe. LHA event organizers, committee members, and safety officers will be covered with both personal injury, organizational liability and personal liability insurance while in the commission of their duties as LHA World War II Committee Members. Unit Commanders are highly encouraged to seek out liability insurance for their own unit members, either independently or through the LHA.

The LHA National Headquarters at P.O. Box 1389, Wilmington, Vermont 05363, maintains a set of rules and activities list for conducting schools of the soldier. This list explains the details of scheduling, benefits of liability insurance, authenticity and safety inspections as well as unit conduct and drill. Units are free to apply for this information with membership in the LHA.

SAFETY REGULATIONS

WORLD WAR II COMMITTEE—LIVING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

19 FEBRUARY 2005 (REVISED)

- I. Ejection From Events
 1. Disregarding these Safety Regulations and refusal to obey any and all decisions of the LHA appointed Safety Officers or NCOs will be grounds for immediate dismissal and escort from the event. Serious infractions may lead to permanent actions against the individual and/or the unit involved.

- II. Safety – Command and Control
 1. All participating units will appoint, or have appointed, a unit Safety Coordinator who will be present at the event and who will work with LHA Safety Officers and NCOs. That individual will be responsible for the adherence of each and all their unit members, to all LHA Safety Rules and Regulations. Said individual will identify him or herself to the presiding LHA Safety Officers and NCOs prior to any event.
 2. All participants must be members of a recognized individual unit of five (5) or more members. Members of recognized units with less than five (5) members present (except Feldgendarmerie) will be attached to a larger unit that will assume responsibility for the attached members. Freelancing will not be allowed. A recognized unit is defined as a unit that instructs its’ personnel in appropriate drill, weapons handling and safety procedures.

3. Unit commanders must be a minimum of 21 years of age. They must agree, and verbalize their agreement to the LHA Safety Officers or NCOs, to be “responsible for the safety and authenticity of all members serving as a member of his or her unit”.

III. Safety Inspections

1. Before all LHA units enter events the following items will be checked; any that are found unacceptable will cause that firearm to be rejected as unsafe and will not be allowed on the field of battle until the condition has been corrected and passed.
 - a.) The weapon must have been proof tested before it can be used at an LHA event.
 - b.) Suppressors and Shredders check.
 - c.) Trigger pull and bolt action check.
 - d.) Fit of barrel breech to stock (no gaps between metal and wood).
 - e.) General inspection for obvious cracks and weakening of stock.
 - f.) Fit of bayonet to barrel on a military weapon.
 - g.) Check of all ammunition for type and content, being sure that all ammunition is of a safe blank type and that weapons are properly fitted with devices like shredders where needed.
 - h.) The firearm must be clean and will be cleaned after every day of firing, meaning oiled and inspected for overall damage or malfunction.
2. No person entering a battlefield area and carrying any type of weapon shall be under the age of 16. Persons 16 to 18 years of age must have a parent or guardian present in the event of an accident. A guardian might be a unit commander or unit member who is over the age of 25 who has been given a release form by the parents of the minor to make medical decisions in the event of an accident. Such a release form should include information regarding the minor’s medications or allergies or various other persistent medical conditions. Persons under 16 years of age entering a battlefield area shall fall under these same rules but in addition they shall be in the battlefield area without weapons, for a specific purpose, and under the direct guidance of their parent or guardian at all times. Age issues will be dealt with at the time of Safety Inspections.

IV. Battlefield Rules

1. Absolutely NO LIVE AMMUNITION will be brought to any LHA sponsored WW II Event. This applies to ammunition brought to sell, trade or display. Under no circumstances shall anything other than approved blank ammunition of the crimped closure type or wood tipped type with proper shredder be used.
2. All pyrotechnics must be approved by the Senior LHA Safety Officer present prior to any use whatsoever.
3. No weapon shall be discharged directly at an individual at less than twenty (20) yards.
4. No horizontally fired weapons are allowed. All vertically fired projectiles must have approved frangible warheads and weigh 12 ounces or less.
5. Affixed bayonets are forbidden at all times.
6. The use of metal bodied parachute flares, artillery simulators or other high explosive “simulators” are strictly forbidden.
7. All motor vehicles participating in an LHA Event must be driven by a licensed driver in a sensible manner. Any vehicle driven “off road” will be preceded by a ground guide walking in front of the vehicle to avoid personnel that may be hiding in the surrounding foliage. All crew members must be inside the vehicle at all times when it is moving. No one is to ride on or outside of a vehicle unless they are a bona fide member of the crew of that vehicle or have been given permission to do so by the owners of said vehicle.
8. Absolutely NO ignitable devices are to be thrown or projected at or near any motor vehicle.
9. No alcoholic beverages are to be consumed or present at any LHA sponsored event.
10. All federal, state, and local ordinances not specifically mentioned will be obeyed at all times.

11. Artillery Crews should be trained so that each man is familiar with all jobs related to the firing of the gun and crews should be observant of the following:
 - a.) The powder or shell box should be 15 feet to the rear of the trail of the gun.
 - b.) The gun should not be fired with anyone ahead of the bore closer than one hundred (100) feet in a sixty (60) degree arch from the bore. Common sense for larger guns should be used – the larger the gun the larger the distance from the gun is required.
12. If horses or work animals of any sort are employed in an event the following should be adhered to:
 - a.) Horses should not be allowed to penetrate opposing forces lines.
 - b.) Horses should never be closer than thirty feet to an enemy position.
 - c.) Horses should be 50 feet from firing artillery and held from the ground (no rider on their back).
13. When conducting activities in or around historic buildings or structures the following should be adhered to:
 - a.) Do everything possible not to damage the structure, be aware of delicate furnishings, wood finishes, glass and so on.
 - b.) No cannons or large bore weapons or pyrotechnic devices should be used in an historic structure.
 - c.) Large bore weapons should not be fired at, from within, or even near an historic structure.
 - d.) Historic structures can only be used with the express permission of the owner and upon leaving they should be cleaned and returned to a condition as good or better than before the use occurred.

V. Public Demonstrations: Displays and battles where nonreenactors might attend either formally or informally as individuals (the general public) or as a group of buffs or history enthusiasts.

1. Under no circumstances shall firearms be loaded with any type of ammunition while in the presence of the public.
2. Under no circumstances shall the public be allowed to handle ammunition or weapons.
3. The public shall not be allowed to handle edged weapons.
4. Discharge of weapons as part of a demonstration shall take place in a controlled situation and area that isolates and protects all participants and spectators.
5. Bayonets will only be drawn as part of a controlled prescheduled demonstration and then only at the command of the unit officer and under the guidance of the on site LHA safety officer. (An approved demonstration would be to show bayonet drill or bayonet practice on a dummy. Mock hand to hand combat with a steel weapon is forbidden.) This rule also applies to all other edged weapons.
6. All firearms, ammunition and edged weapons not in the direct control and possession of their owner shall be stored in a safe, secure manner that is inaccessible to unauthorized personnel. Firearms and blank ammunition shall be stored in separate locations.
7. Each unit shall be responsible for safety and security within its' own camp area. This may include proper prior arrangements with the event sponsor.
8. During an artillery or large bore weapon demonstration, powder or shells should be in a closed box at least fifteen (15) feet behind the breech. The public, since they might smoke, should be kept twenty (20) feet away from powder or shell boxes and in an area not to be forward of twenty five (25) feet behind the end of the trails. The size of the gun should be considered during the decision for the distance of the public away from the gun.
9. No public should be closer than one hundred (100) feet to the muzzle of a gun. Of course, the larger guns should allow more distance. A test fire before the public arrives might be required to gain perspective of where the public should stand in relation to a cannon or large bore gun.
10. No weapons should be fired inside encampment areas. Individual firing of weapons should be in a designated area that is roped off and where weapons can be pointed away from spectators or other personnel.

11. All battlefield and demonstration areas must be designated as such and must have a rope or other barrier to separate spectators from participants.
12. All weapons demonstration firing must take place at a distance of twenty-five (25) feet or more from the public, and weapons shall be fired away from the public, but never in the direction of the public.
13. Battles, where an opposing force advances toward the public may not fire in the public's direction, except when the opposing line is between the attackers and the spectator line. At that time, the defending force (those with their backs to the public) must be at least fifty (50) feet from the spectators. Those firing in the direction of the spectators must be at least one hundred and fifty (150) feet from the spectators and be aiming fifteen (15) feet in front of the opposing enemy target, and at an oblique.
14. Cannon or large bore fire must always be at a distance of at least two hundred (200) feet from the spectator line when firing in the general direction where spectators may be located. Artillery used in a direct fire situation must be oblique with the spectator line, or firing away from the spectator line.

VI. Camp Safety

The use of common sense while setting up, starting and maintaining cook fires and stoves, participating in the overall encampment, and dismantling the camp, will reduce the number of hazards and accidents. **MOST ACCIDENTS OCCUR IN CAMP.** The overall Commander of the Camp shall either be an appointed Provost Marshal or the Event Coordinator. This person will be in charge of castramentation, the fire pit areas, and the general administration of the encampment. The Provost Marshal will advise all participants of specific rules and regulations regarding the camp, since various locations, city and state ordinances and conditions would necessitate accommodation to the situation. The safety rules that follow are a general guideline only, and will be augmented by specifics as required by local ordinances or site space restrictions.

1. Camp Fires

- a.) All fires will be enclosed in proper stoves, fire pits, steel plate. or fire boxes not to exceed an area of four (4) feet in diameter. All flammable material such as limbs, leaves, and so on shall be cleared from the fire area for a distance of four (4) feet in all directions.
- b.) Fires shall not be left unattended in camp areas at any time and must be attended by an adult.
- c.) No fuels other than wood should be used for open fires in consideration of safety and site integrity. Authentic stoves may use fuels other than wood, but all coal or other refuse should be taken home by those using stoves. We shouldn't pollute the site.
- d.) The area surrounding the fire pits or stoves shall be attended by an adult reenactor to prohibit direct contact of the fire with any member of the general public or reenactor children.
- e.) Open fires or stoves of questionable quality must be extinguished before turning in for the evening.
- f.) No bonfires are allowed.
- g.) The hours of burning and the size and placement of fires shall be in accordance with local and state regulations and shall be regulated by the Provost Marshal or host or both.
- h.) Fires must be no closer than five (5) feet to a cook fly, and twenty (20) feet away from tents.
- i.) A bucket of water must be at each fire pit.
- j.) Children must not be allowed to tend fires without close adult supervision; no playing around fire pits or stoves.
- k.) At the end of its' use, fire pits must be drenched in water, stirred, and drenched again, replacing the sod and re-leveling the ground to its' former appearance.
- l.) **NO GARBAGE MAY BE BURNED IN A FIRE PIT OR BURIED IN A FIRE PIT AT THE END OF AN EVENT.**
- m.) Axes and hatchets (bladed tools) must not be left around camp fires, wood piles, or in walk way areas, but rather they must be sheathed and put in a secured area such as a tent, vehicle, or chest.

2. Evening Lighting
 - a.) Period style candle, gas, kerosene or other lamps may be used but they must completely enclose the flame on four sides with glass or other flame resistant materials to prevent the flame from having contact with tents or other materials.
 - b.) All lanterns should be placed at a safe distance from flammable articles such as tents, and clothing.
3. Smoking
 - a.) Smoking is to be prohibited in tents.
 - b.) Smoking shall not be allowed within fifty (50) feet of any ammunition storage area.
4. Public Safety
 - a.) Camps must be neat and well organized with clear walkways through and around the camps.
 - b.) Camp fires and stoves must always be attended by an alert adult that will keep spectators a safe distance from the fires.
 - c.) Cook fires must always be a bed of coals or of practical size. Bonfires are not allowed.

VII. Ammunition Storage

1. No loose gun powder should be stored in camp.
2. All ammunition should be stored in secured boxes in secure locations.
3. Blank cartridges and/or loose powder will not be thrown into stoves or fire pits under penalty of expulsion from the event.
4. Smoking is prohibited in ammunition storage areas.
5. Powder and ammunition should be stored no closer than twenty-five (25) feet from any fire pit or stove.

VIII. Clothing Safety

1. Loose clothing such as scarves should not be worn around fires.
2. All clothes should be made of all natural materials and of a tight weave according to the unit you portray – wool, linen, cotton and leather.

IX. First Aid

1. All units should keep a list of members who are medically trained. (EMTs, Paramedics, Nurses, and Doctors)
2. If possible, all first aid should be given by a medically trained person.
3. Ambulances should be on site or close by during the day for both the public's and the reenactor's safety.
4. Each unit should have a list of members who have illnesses, and a list of medications taken by each member, as well as medications that members are allergic to. (This is for use by emergency personnel.)

X. Animals

1. No non-working animals (pets) should be allowed in camp (i.e. dogs & cats)
2. Working animals should be kept in a separate area from the camp for the safety of the animal, reenactor and the public.
3. Animals should always be in the direct control of their owner when in use in camp.