

You Are Responsible For Your Own Safety

Be your own range safety officer.



I have often used the phrase, “You are responsible for your own safety” to remind us that we each bear the burden of protecting ourselves from a criminal attack. But, it goes further than that. It also relates to any time that I am handling a firearm or am around others handling firearms, as it is my primary responsibility to see that I don’t wind up getting “accidentally” hurt.

I used to join a big shooting group every summer in Colorado, and for a time, I was asked to be the range safety officer. On the very first morning, I would bring everyone together and have them raise their right hands. At which point I would swear them all in as range safety officers... then I would go on with a regular safety briefing. The point being that, regardless of who the designated safety officer is, I am responsible for my own safety.

Just like most of you, I have sometimes witnessed unsafe practices at shooting ranges. If I am in charge, I stop things and try to work with the shooter to correct the problem. When not in charge, I try to contact someone who is. Failing that, there have been times when I have just packed up and gone home early.

One of the biggest problems occurs when someone buys a gun that is new to them and doesn’t bother to have someone else show them the safe operation. It reminds me of a police sergeant I once knew who took a semi-automatic pistol from a suspect. The

sergeant carefully racked the slide and removed the round from the chamber, then took the loaded magazine out (read that again). Fortunately, he had enough sense to point the muzzle up when he pulled the trigger. Lordy, that was loud!

What impresses me is that today's shooters have become much more safety conscious. We used to talk about "accidental discharges," and now we call them "negligent discharges." Just as a reminder, an accidental discharge might be when lightning strikes the trigger of the gun, causing it to cycle and fire. Just about all other discharges are due to poor handling or poor maintenance of the firearm. I like to post vintage photos on social media, and it tickles me to see the number of responses pointing out that Wild Willie, or whoever, has his finger on the trigger. It tickles me but it also pleases me to see that we have made some headway in this business of gun safety.

Yes, things are getting better in regards to gun safety, but we can't afford to rest on our laurels. We must continually teach it at home and preach it whenever we are among our shooting friends. We look out for each other and we remind each other that yes, you are responsible for your own safety, but it doesn't hurt to help and remind a fellow shooter as well.