

Basic Reenacting Safety Guidelines

Venturing Crew 1872

(Reviewed 2003-2009)

The following are some very basic safety guidelines used by Venture Crew 1872 when using black powder firearms at living history battle reenactments. The firearms and artillery we use are real. Our unit is just as well armed as any US Cavalry Company from the US Civil War. Even though we fire blanks, these weapons are just as deadly as they were one hundred and forty years ago. Safety must be first in our minds when we use these weapons. Despite the fact we are organized, drill and "fight" as a military unit at reenactments, we teach history - *we do not train anyone to "kill."* These guidelines are to protect our own troops and protect our friends, the "enemy," with whom we reenact historical battles.

General:

- Review safety issues before shooting at each event.
- Conduct an inspection of all artillery and small arms before each use or reenactment.
- Use common sense and consider safety first.
- Observe legal limits on storage and transportation of black powder: Fifty pounds of bulk powder under one roof without a proper magazine and twenty-five pounds per vehicle for transportation.
- Transport and store powder and primers separately.

Small Arms:

- The crew will have members that hold current NRA Black Powder certifications at reenactments.
- No member shall bring live ammunition of any kind to a reenactment.
- Treat every gun as if it were loaded. Even blanks can kill.
- Pay attention to where you are pointing the gun and never train the sights on any individual.
- When firing on "enemy troops" at a Civil War or other reenactment, elevate the small arms well above heads of opposing troops. Twice the height of a person is a minimum.
- When "enemy troops" are closer than 50 feet, use extreme elevation or cease firing.
- Do not OVER CHARGE small arms. Use 50 grains of FF or FFF black powder in carbines and rifles. Use only 15 to 30 grains of FFF black powder in revolvers.
- Use only cream of wheat or cornmeal as wadding in revolvers.
- Use hearing protection.
- Carry revolvers in a flap holster. Do not unholster a loaded pistol without orders to do so.
- Do not allow any non-crew member to handle loaded small arms.

Artillery:

- The crew will attend a U.S. Field Artillery Association (USFAA) sanctioned Artillery School at least once a year.
- Always follow established procedure and the standard, practiced artillery drills. Stop drills with a "Cease Fire" command immediately whenever necessary. Observe the "3-Minute" rule with respect to rate of fire.
- Know the "safety areas" around and in front of artillery and watch closely for "incursions."
- When firing artillery at "enemy troops" cease-fire when closer than 150 feet.
- All crew members should call and echo "Cease-Fire" when necessary.

Remember:

- The loss of life, limb or eyesight is always a risk when dealing with black powder, but can be avoided by observing these safety rules.
- Damage to hearing can easily occur with any misuse of our firearms. This can happen in a single shot or slowly over time, so always wear hearing protection.
- Most artillery incidents happen when you deviate from practiced drills.
- Most small arm accidents happen when people are "playing" with the arms, not in drills or in the reenactments. Do NOT play with small arms.