



Sporting Firearms

Safe Handling Considerations and Shipping Guidelines for Interstate Transportation

(The citations herein refer to federal statutes and regulations (current as of August 1, 2025): state and local laws may impose additional restrictions.)

This publication has been prepared by the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute to provide anyone concerned with the handling or shipment of sporting firearms certain basic and important facts about the subject. These statements and recommendations do not supersede local, state or federal regulations, or constitute legal advice. Local authorities should be consulted regarding any regulation on the storage, transportation, display, sale, and handling of firearms within each individual community. Information is updated periodically, however SAAMI provides no warranty or guarantee as to the accuracy, adequacy or completeness of the information.

A person who possesses a valid Federal Firearms License (FFL) is referred to herein as a "licensee." Anyone who does not possess an FFL is described as a "non-licensee." Notations in brackets indicate federal regulations to which the reader may wish to refer: e.g. {[18 USC 922](#)} refers to Title 18, United States Code, Section 922, while {[27 CFR 478.30](#)} refers to Title 27, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 478, Section 30.

General Transportation Regulations for Both Licensees and Non-Licensees

1. Certain persons are prohibited from shipping, transporting, or receiving firearms in interstate or foreign commerce {[18 USC 922\(g\)](#); [27 CFR 478.32](#)}. These persons include:
 - Persons under indictment for, or who have been convicted of a crime punishable by more than one-year imprisonment;
 - fugitives from justice;

- Unlawful users of or addicted to any controlled substance;
 - Adjudicated mental defectives or persons who have been committed to a mental institution;
 - Illegal aliens;
 - Persons having been discharged from the Armed Forces under dishonorable conditions;
 - Persons having renounced United States citizenship;
 - Persons subject to certain restraining or protective orders; or
 - Persons convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence.
2. No one may transport, ship, or receive in interstate or foreign commerce, any stolen firearm or ammunition, knowing or having reasonable cause to know was stolen {[18 USC 922\(i\), \(j\)](#); [27 CFR 478.33](#)}
 3. No one may knowingly transport, ship, or receive in interstate or foreign commerce a firearm which has had the manufacturer's or importer's serial number removed, obliterated, or altered {[18 USC 922\(k\)](#); [27 CFR 478.34](#)}.
 4. Any person not otherwise prohibited from transporting, shipping, or receiving a firearm may transport a firearm interstate for any lawful purpose, if he or she may lawfully possess and carry the firearm in the place of origin and destination, and provided the firearm is unloaded and that it is not readily or directly accessible from the passenger compartment. In vehicles without a separate trunk, the gun must be in a locked container other than the glove compartment or console {[18 USC 926a](#); [27 CFR 478.38](#)}.
 5. No one may knowingly ship a firearm or ammunition in interstate or foreign commerce to any person other than a holder of a Federal Firearms License without written notice to the carrier that a firearm or ammunition is being shipped {[18 USC 922 \(e\)](#), [27 CFR 478.31\(a\)](#)}.
 6. A carrier is required to obtain a written delivery receipt from the recipient of any shipment containing a firearm {[18 USC 922\(f\)\(2\)](#); [27 CFR 478.31\(d\)](#)}.

Transportation Regulations for Federal Firearms License (FFL) Holders

1. Before shipping a firearm to another licensee, a holder of a Federal Firearms License (FFL) must at a minimum obtain a certified copy of the recipient's FFL. However, this is not required under the following conditions {[27 CFR 478.94](#)}:

- If the recipient has already furnished a certified copy of its current license, or
- If the firearm is being returned to the recipient, or
- If the recipient is part of a multi-licensed business organization, and a certified list of valid license information for all of the business locations has been provided.

2. Certain shipments or deliveries are prohibited [{27 CFR 478.99}](#):

- A. Pistols or revolvers may not be sold or delivered to non-licensees residing (or whom the licensee has reasonable cause to believe reside) outside the FFL holder's state. Rifles or shotguns may, under certain circumstances, be sold and shipped to non-licensees residing in other states; the requirements of [27 CFR 478.96 \(c\)](#) must be fully met [{18 USC 922\(b\)\(3\)}](#).
- B. The minimum age for purchase or receipt of a rifle or shotgun is 18 years; for a pistol or revolver, it is 21 years [{18 USC 922\(b\)\(1\); 27 CFR 478.99 \(b\)}](#).
- C. Firearms may not be sold or disposed of to the following categories of persons:
 - Persons under indictment or information in any court for a felony, or any other crime for which the judge could imprison them for more than one year, or are a current member of the military who has been charged with violation(s) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and whose charge(s) have been referred to a general court-martial [{18 USC 922\(d\)\(1\)}](#);
 - Persons having been convicted in any court, including a military court, of a felony, or any other crime for which the judge could have imprisoned them for more than one year, even if they received a shorter sentence including probation [{18 USC 922\(d\)\(1\)}](#);
 - A fugitive from justice [{18 USC 922\(d\)\(2\)}](#);
 - An unlawful user of, or addicted to, marijuana or any depressant, stimulant, narcotic drug, or any other controlled substance [{18 USC 922\(d\)\(3\)}](#);
 - Persons having ever been adjudicated as a mental defective or who have ever been committed to a mental institution at 16 years of age or older [{18 USC 922\(d\)\(4\)}](#);
 - Persons having ever been discharged from the Armed Forces under dishonorable conditions [{18 USC 922\(d\)\(6\)}](#);
 - Persons subject to a court order, including a Military Protection Order issued by a military judge or magistrate, restraining them from harassing, stalking, or threatening a child or an intimate partner or child of such partner [{18 USC 922\(d\)\(8\)}](#);
 - Persons (with certain exceptions) who have been convicted in any court, including general courts-martial, of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, that included, as an element, the use of force against victims in specified categories of relation [{18 USC 921\(a\)\(33\); 18 USC 922\(d\)\(9\)}](#);

- Persons intending to sell or otherwise dispose of the firearm in furtherance of a felony, a federal crime of terrorism, or a drug trafficking offense {[18 USC 922\(d\)\(10\)](#)};
- Persons intending to sell or otherwise dispose of the firearm to a person otherwise prohibited from purchasing a firearm {[18 USC 922\(d\)\(11\)](#)};
- Persons having renounced their United States citizenship {[18 USC 922\(d\)\(7\)](#)}; or
- Persons who are aliens illegally or unlawfully in the United States, or (with certain exceptions) are an alien admitted to the United States under a non-immigrant visa {[18 USC 922\(d\)\(5\)](#)}.

Transportation Regulations for Non-Licensees

1. A non-licensee may mail a rifle or shotgun to a resident of his or her own state or to a licensee in any state. Handguns may not be mailed. {[U.S. Postal Service Domestic Mail Manual Section C024](#)}.
2. A non-licensee may not transfer, sell, trade, give, transport, or deliver a firearm to another non-licensee who lives in a different state {[18 USC 922\(a\)\(1\)\(A\)](#); [27 CFR 478.30](#)}. However, a person may ship a firearm to his- or herself, in care of another person in the state where he or she intends to hunt or shoot if the other person does not open the package.
3. A non-licensee who is not otherwise prohibited from possessing or shipping a firearm may ship the firearm direct to a licensee for any lawful purpose, and the licensee may return that firearm or a replacement of the same kind and type directly to the individual {[27 CFR 478.147](#)}.
4. Common Carriers other than the USPS may also have restrictions on the shipment of firearms by non-licensees. UPS and FedEx both currently limit the availability of firearm shipping services to licensees. DHL prohibits the shipment of firearms entirely. Non-licensees should closely consult the shipping policies of any common carriers they plan to use to ship personal firearms {[FedEx – How to Ship firearms](#); [UPS – How to Ship Firearms](#); [DHL – Restricted Commodities](#)}

Common Carrier Shipping Restrictions

1. Common Carriers (such as UPS, FedEx, and similar services) each have their own corporate policies regarding the shipment of firearms. Licensees should review such policies and confirm compliant practices with account representatives when using such services. {[FedEx – How to Ship firearms](#); [UPS – How to Ship Firearms](#)}
2. UPS and FedEx each require FFLs to sign specific agreements related to the shipment of firearms before they are allowed to ship firearms through their services.
3. Common Carriers may have restrictions on the types of firearms which they will ship, for instance prohibiting fully-automatic firearms, or firearms without serial numbers.

Packing Firearms for Shipment

1. **All firearms must be unloaded prior to shipment.** Ensure that magazines and chambers are empty, and do not include any ammunition in the package with the firearm. {[Mailing Standards of the United States Postal Service, Domestic Mail Manual, Mailing Firearms – Clarification](#); [FedEx – How to Ship firearms](#); [UPS – How to Ship Firearms](#)}
2. Protect the finish of the firearm from abrasion by preventing movement within the box or case, and cushion against impact during transportation.
3. A factory-supplied individual box or case should be enclosed in a carton which will conceal the identity of the contents and afford additional protection from damage. The outer packaging should not bear any marks, tags, or labels indicating that the package contains firearms. Most Common Carriers will require that no identifying markings appear on the outermost packaging {[18 USC 922\(e\)](#); [27 CFR 478.31 \(b\)](#)}.

Firearms Safety

The fundamental rules of firearms safety are brief and simple, and they apply to all firearms - rifles, shotguns, pistols, and revolvers. They apply to all locations where firearms may be handled - in the home, in the store, on the range, in the field, and during transport. These rules apply equally to all persons, whether experienced in the use of firearms or a complete novice.

1. **Keep the firearm pointed in a safe direction.** This is the primary rule of firearm safety. A “safe direction” is one in which if the firearm went off, it would not cause injury or damage. Common sense dictates the safe direction, depending upon current circumstances.
2. **Keep firearms unloaded when not actually in use.** Each time you pick up a firearm, immediately open the action and inspect the chamber(s), which should be empty. If the firearm has a magazine, remove it before opening the action and ensure that it is empty. If you do not know how to open the action, leave the firearm alone and seek help from someone who does. Firearms and ammunition should be secured in a safe place, separate from each other.
3. **Do not rely upon a firearm’s “safety.”** A “safety” is a mechanical device which can fail at any time. Always keep your finger off the trigger until you are on target and have decided to shoot.
4. **Be sure of your target and what is beyond it.** Be aware of everything which the bullet might strike. Identify your target positively and know what is behind it. A .22 caliber bullet can travel over a mile, and a .30-06 more than three miles.
5. **Use correct ammunition.** Improper ammunition can destroy a firearm and cause serious personal injury. Be certain that the ammunition exactly matches the caliber or gauge of your firearm.

6. **If the firearm fails to fire when the trigger is pulled, handle with care!** Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction while you carefully open the action, unload, and dispose of the cartridge safely.
7. **Always wear eye and ear protection.** Any exposure to shooting noise can permanently damage hearing; vision protection is essential to protect your eyesight.
8. **Be sure the barrel is clear of obstructions before shooting.** Before loading a firearm, open the action, ensure there is no ammunition in the chamber or magazine, and visually inspect the bore. Any obstruction, however small, can severely damage a firearm or cause significant injuries to the shooter or those nearby.
9. **Do not alter or modify your firearm, and have it serviced regularly.** Firearms are complicated mechanisms; modifications, repairs, and servicing require training and experience. Check with the manufacturer for details and recommended service intervals.
10. **Learn the mechanical and handling characteristics of your firearm.** Read and refer to the instruction manual which is available from the manufacturer. Do not use any firearm without a complete understanding of its functioning and safe use.

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