Sheet'ká Kwáan
Sitka Tribe of Alaska
Administrative Policy & Procedures

FIREARM POLICY & PROCEDURES

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to specify STA's safety standards and procedures regarding STA firearms, and to ensure the safety of all employees that may handle firearms during the course of their employment.

II. AUTHORITY

STA Constitution Article VII, Section 1(f) empowers the Tribal Council "to authorize… Tribal employees to administer the affairs of the Tribe." The Employee Handbook Part 3.05 authorizes the Chief Executive Officer to develop policies and procedures regarding STA firearms.

III. DEFINITIONS

a. Aggressive bear: a bear that displays behavior that causes any person to fear immediate serious physical injury or substantial property destruction.
b. Authorized STA employee: an STA employee whose position description includes the requirement that they carry a firearm(s) in the course of their employment, and as such has successfully passed a criminal background check pursuant to Criminal Background Check Ordinance (CBC) 01.04.04(c) and has completed a pre-employment drug and alcohol test pursuant to the Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Ordinance as a safety-sensitive employee.
c. Custodian: an authorized STA employee responsible for the purchase, maintenance, inventory, and storage of firearms.
d. Handler: any authorized STA employee who is actively possessing, carrying, holding, wielding, using, or firing an STA firearm.

IV. PROCEDURES

a. DUTIES OF HANDLERS

1. Pre-Use Requirements

Before handling or using an STA firearm, the Handler must:

A. Pass a background check authorizing the individual to carry a firearm performed by STA HR (See CBC Ordinance);

B. Pass a Pre-employment Drug and Alcohol testing per STA's DAFW Ordinance as a safety-sensitive employee; and
C. Complete a firearm safety training course administered by STA custodian or in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service.

2. Ongoing Responsibilities

To ensure their own safety and the safety of others, the Handler(s) must:

A. Always be responsible for their actions and for any firearms in their possession;
B. Comply with all applicable federal, state, and Tribal laws while in the field;
C. Use STA firearms solely for personal protection and authorized target practice;
D. Practice monthly with the STA firearm they intend to use at a gun range or in the field, as directed by the Custodian;
E. Safely clean STA firearms after each use;
F. Carry a firearm at all times during surveys and whenever away from camp, including while at the weir;
G. When not carrying the firearm, Handlers share the following responsibilities for firearm safety :
    i. Keeping the action open;
    ii. Keeping the safety on;
    iii. Removing cartridges from the magazine during boat rides, plane rides, inside of any vehicle, and within city limits; and
    iv. Procuring and utilizing a waterproof gun case to store the firearm during transit.
H. When carrying a firearm in the field, ensure firearm safety by:
    i. Complying with the U.S. Forest Service's recommended procedure for safely carrying a firearm in the field; and
    ii. Checking the condition of the firearm to ensure compliance with Section IV(a)(2)(H)(i) periodically and every time the firearm is picked up or changes hands.
I. Always carry bear spray in addition to an STA firearm;
J. Request instruction prior to using any unfamiliar equipment;
K. Refrain from using STA firearms for recreational use; and
L. Do not use personal firearms or personal ammunition without prior approval from the Custodian.

3. Bear Encounter Protocol

When encountering an aggressive bear, the Handler must:

A. Follow established deterrence protocol:
   i Stay calm;
   ii Make noise to alert bears to human presence; and
   iii Use rubber slugs, aiming at adult bears' backsides to discourage their approach.

B. Use lethal force only as a last resort, and only when the bear poses an immediate and unavoidable threat to human life or of substantial property damage and all non-lethal deterrents have failed.

b. DUTIES OF CUSTODIANS

1. Pre-Purchase Requirements

Before purchasing an STA firearm, the Custodian must:

A. Pass a federal firearms background check; and
B. Successfully complete a firearm safety training course administered by designated STA staff or in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service.

2. Firearm Purchase Process

When purchasing an STA Firearm, the Custodian must:

A. Obtain approval from the Tribal Council through a Tribal Resolution authorizing the purchase as the representative of the Tribe; and
B. Submit a firearm purchase request in accordance with STA procurement procedures; and
C. Purchase the gun on behalf of the Tribe, using the Tribal Resolution to demonstrate authority as a designated representative of the Tribe.

3. Ongoing Custodial Responsibilities

The Custodian(s) must also:

A. Create and maintain an up-to-date inventory of all STA firearms in STA's custody;
B. Annually conduct a physical investory with STA's Finance;
C. Ensure all STA firearms are serviced and in proper working condition, recording the condition of each firearm prior to the beginning of each season and at the end of each season;

D. At the end of each season, identify any firearms which are unserviceable and coordinate for their appropriate disposal;
E. Refrain from issuing any firearm that is not in safe and reliable working condition;
F. Store all firearms in a designated, locked STA gun safe when not in use;
G. Ensure gun safes are located away from any windows and out of public view;
H. Restrict access to gun safes to authorized STA employees and HR Manager; and
I. Lead firearm safety and handling training sessions for all STA handlers.

c. RESOURCE PROTECTION DIRECTOR OVERSIGHT

The Resource Protection Director is responsible for ensuring compliance with the STA Firearm Policy & Procedures.

Approved:

_____ _____

Alicia Gassman, Chief Executive Officer 06/23/2025 Date

FINAL Firearm Procedure 6.20.2025 CLEAN

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