

The **six main duties** of an IDPA Safety Officer are to:

- Set up the Course of Fire (CoF) so that all rounds safely impact the berm or backstop
- manage the efficient and safe flow of shooters through the match
- ensure the safety of the shooter and bystanders on the range
- help the shooter to complete the course of fire correctly and enjoy the match
- handle the shooter using correct and concise range commands
- enforce IDPA rules/scoring consistently so match is conducted in a fair and impartial manner

### **Running the Match**

In addition to managing an active shooter, which is covered by the last three duties, it is critical that SO's become familiar with running a match at Metacon from set up to tear down. The first 3 duties, running the match, are unique to Metacon's ranges and rules. How to run the match was not covered in IDPA's SO course and must be learned on the job. If an injury occurs during the execution of the match, it will most likely be because of an oversight in the running of the match and not the control of the active shooter.

### **Vigilance and Safety Consciousness**

One of the primary reasons Metacon IDPA limits the duration of matches is because the SO is required to be vigilant and safety conscious from the minute they step on the range to set up until the last piece of equipment is locked in the trailer. Maintaining this safety vigilance for this duration is hard work, takes focused effort and can only be done consistently for a limited amount of time. Since the SO is primarily responsible for the safety of the shooter and bystanders on the range, the SO is working for the duration of the match. Although SO's are volunteers, by volunteering, the SO accepts that the match is not a social function but a rigorous work requirement.

### **Set Up Duties**

The SO's will print the CoFs from the NE Combat Pistol League Calendar and review them prior to the match. If there are any questions, contact Glenn. Bring the printed CoF to the range and arrive at least two hours before first shot. The SO's, Scorekeepers and Match Director (MD) will get all of the required equipment from the trailer and move it to the range. Because the CoF designs provide a general idea of what the CoF should be, e.g. usually no documented distances, it is up to the SO to use the CoF design as a guide along with their own knowledge and experience to set up a safe and enjoyable CoF. Some items to consider:

- By Metacon rules, no targets greater than 5' high on the outdoor range
- Bullets should impact the berm. Our shooters range from 6'5" to 5'2" so target height will be a major concern. If bullets must impact into the ground, they should impact further than halfway from the target to the berm.
- If a CoF references a classifier stage, set up as close as possible to the classifier in the IDPA Rulebook, which is in the toolbox with the timers.
- Due to the available shooting angles on both the indoor and outdoor range, controlling positions where shots are fired is critical to keeping bullets within the barber poles (outdoor) or into the backstop (indoor).
- Strongly consider the *Set Up* and *Safety Issue* instructions in the CoF design
- Extra caution should be taken when using dynamic targets and props. Poppers can fall unexpectedly and movers can be actuated by shooters accidentally as they move through the target field.
- Instruct the shooters on how to reset movers safely. Identify and communicate any trip hazards or places where the shooters should not transit.
- Have multiple people review the final set up. Look for bullet impact, tripping hazards, etc. Think of what shooters might do and mitigate any safety issues. The SO **must** have the CoF approved as safe by the MD, who is a Metacon Member.

The shooters will arrive an hour early. The SO should engage them in set up and wherever possible instruct them in the process. This is a way to develop the next batch of SOs.

### **Match Flow Duties**

The two SOs and two scorekeepers must work together efficiently as a team to keep the match flowing smoothly and safely. At Metacon we call the range “Hot”, shoot the left stage, call the range “Clear”, shoot the right stage, call the range “Safe – score and paste targets.” When the competitor is finished shooting a stage, the SO makes holstering their gun first priority and making the range call the second. When one squad is shooting, the other squad’s SO must be keeping watch on the remaining shooters and also getting their next shooter ready to go to the line. This is also the time to explain to a previous shooter any procedural or address any safety concerns. Before the match starts, the SO will align expectations with the Scorekeeper, which might include where they want the next shooter to wait, whether they will call time or show the timer, and any cover calls.

#### **Breaks:**

Because the SO must be vigilant even when the other squad is shooting, there is no time for a break. If you need one, ask another SO to temporarily relieve you. We all know how demanding it is to do the job right.

#### **Safety Duties**

The SO’s primary focus must be the safety of the shooter and the bystanders. From the time the shooter steps up to the line until that shooter finishes the course of fire, the SO’s focus **must be solely on the shooter**, and primarily on the gun. This is especially critical from the time the shooter is told to load and make ready until the shooter’s gun is re-holstered. *At no time during this period should the SO’s attention be distracted from the shooter’s gun.*

‘Hard focus’ is difficult to maintain, but can be accomplished with practice. The SO should avoid all temptations to look at the timer or the targets, or to watch the shooter too closely for cover violations or other procedural errors, instead leaving that up to the Scorekeeper; The SO’s focus must stay on the gun. Of particular concern is the shooter’s trigger finger, which must be out of the trigger guard always unless actually firing or preparing to fire.

#### **Some ground rules:**

The following conditions are grounds for immediate disqualification:

- Second “Finger” call when the muzzle is not pointed in a safe direction, e.g., into the berm.
- Muzzle of loaded gun pointed up-range
- General belligerence
- A shot striking the ground within six feet of the shooter
- Any shot over the berm
- Refusal to acknowledge the SO’s authority

The following situations call for a warning, and possible disqualification on a second violation:

- First “Finger” call during loading, reloading, or unloading or when gun is not aimed at a target
- Failure to follow the Safety Officer’s commands when given.

#### **Other safety considerations:**

In addition to watching the gun, the SO should try to be generally aware of where the shooter is going next, in order to avoid getting in a position where he interferes with the shooter or is endangered by the shooter. SO should generally stand about three (3) feet to the side and three (3) feet to the rear of the shooter and must be aware of their position as the competitor reholsters. **Never be side by side with or forward of the shooter.**

#### **Rule enforcement**

IDPA matches are competitions so they must have rules. It is your job as SO to know and also enforce these rules as fairly and consistently as possible to ensure that the competition is fair. The same rules apply to Masters and Novices, and friends and strangers alike.

The SO should be very careful not to become too focused on rule enforcement. Cut the new shooters some slack on procedural at their first few matches. Be liberal in interpreting the CoF description when it is vague. Avoid becoming a “range nazi.” Remember, you should be helping the shooter to avoid procedural errors, not waiting to pounce on them when they make a mistake.

**If ever in doubt of the safety of a situation, immediately yell “Stop.”**

**We can always reshoot but we can’t call back a bullet.**