



BSA SAFETY MOMENT

SHOTGUN SHOOTING— AN ASSISTANT SCOUTMASTER'S STORY

SUMMARY

Over a seven-year period, a unit grew their annual shooting sports campout at a local gun range. Because of the large number of new shooters, an “impromptu” range was set up just to the side of one of the dedicated trap/skeet ranges.




About 2 1/2 hours into the shotgun shooting sessions, an 11-year-old Scout was on the shooting line. He had had practice shots early in the day and was on the second or third round for record to complete the Shotgun Shooting merit badge. Sometime during this period, the two adults helping had moved their chairs 10 to 15 feet to the shooter's left and slightly behind the firing line to hear the “pull” command. The instructor, to the shooter's right, dropped a shell into the pump action 20 gauge and closed the action. It appears the instructor then turned to his left to ask what the shooter's score was; by doing this, the shooter turned as well with the shotgun. The instructor reached for the shotgun, and it discharged, striking an assistant Scoutmaster in the arm with 47 pellets.

Thankfully, the assistant Scoutmaster is recovering from the injury, and the Scout, while shaken, is still taking part in Scouting.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The impromptu range, opened to serve new shooters, created a condition where club resources were strained and the normal operating procedures for the two dedicated trap/skeet ranges did not apply or were different.
- It was assumed that both an NRA instructor and a range safety officer were present at the impromptu range. The BSA requires both be present during this type of shooting activity.
- All three basic shooting safety rules were broken at the same time.

THREE RULES OF FIREARM SAFETY:

-  ALWAYS keep your gun pointed in a safe direction.
-  ALWAYS keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
-  ALWAYS keep your gun unloaded until ready to use.

WHAT CAN YOU DO

- Share this story at your next shooting sports activity.
- When handling firearms or working a shooting range, take a Safety PAUSE: Pause before you start. Assess possible hazards. Understand how to proceed safely. Share your plan with others. Execute the activity safely.
- Monitor the environment for changing conditions that could affect safety (e.g., “impromptu” range, strained resources, and number of participants).
- Know and follow the standard operating procedure (SOP) for any range being used.

RESOURCES

- BSA Shooting Sports: www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/shooting-sports/
- Procedures to Use Public or Private Property for a Shooting Sports Range: www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/shooting-sports/permission/
- BSA Safety Moment—Shooting Safety: www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safety-moments/shooting-safety/