

# New Mexico Department of Game & Fish

## Live Fire Instructor Training

# Live Fire Instructor Training

The Hunter Education and Shooting Sports Programs recommend establishing the following criteria for a safe and viable live-fire volunteer program and enabling volunteers, such as yourself, to become more involved with the live-fire events, classes, and outreach initiatives offered by the department.

This short online training module will provide the necessary information and updates to allow you to teach and assist with New Mexico Department of Game and Fish live-fire activities sponsored by the Hunter Education or Shooting Sports Programs.



# Live Fire Instructor Training

No matter the live-fire program, it is imperative that everyone strictly follows established department Live Fire Policies, Procedures, Range Commands, Emergency Procedures, and recommended Range Layouts to reduce and or eliminate risk during a scheduled event or activity.

**SAFETY  
FIRST**

**ALWAYS TREAT THE GUN  
AS IF IT WAS LOADED!  
KEEP THE BARREL POINTED  
IN A SAFE DIRECTION.**

**ALWAYS KEEP THE TRIGGER FINGER STRAIGHT  
UNLESS READY TO FIRE. ALWAYS KNOW  
THE SURROUNDINGS OF THE SHOOTING AREA.**

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# Volunteer Designations

Based on the established Live Fire Credentials, volunteers who wish to assist with a department live-fire activity must have the proper certifications for established range designations and duties.

**Lead Live Fire Instructor:** a Hunter Education Instructor volunteer who holds a current certification and/or credential listed on the Live Fire Credentials form\*.

**Range Master:** a current, certified Lead Live Fire Instructor and/or a certified department volunteer with a current live-fire training certification as listed\*.

**Range Coach:** a certified volunteer\* with minimal to no live-fire training. May not function as a Lead Live Fire Instructor or Range Master until additional certification/credentials are met.



# General Live Fire Policies

*An important guideline to remember is safety must be your number one priority* while instructing or assisting with ANY department-sponsored live-fire program.

MARKSMANSHIP IS NOT ALWAYS THE PRIMARY GOAL. It is more important that the participant enjoy the experience while exhibiting responsible and safe firearms handling.

The four basic, most important firearm safety rules to remember and implement are:

1. Always treat a firearm as if it were loaded.
2. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
3. Always keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.
4. Properly identify your target and what lies beyond it.



# General Live Fire Policies

The following are policies that apply to any department program that engages in a live-fire class, activity, or event:

1. Live fire programs are to teach and evaluate shooter skills and knowledge in the safe handling of firearms. Marksmanship may only sometimes be the goal, except in competition-based activities.
2. All live fire programs and activities shall include a Range Master. A Range Master is responsible for the immediate supervision of participants and Range Coaches during live fire.
3. All range help must fall under the approved Live Fire Credentials\* as established by the department.
4. Current certified Department Volunteers who do not possess additional live-fire training may assist with a live-fire activity or event if under the direct supervision or mentorship of a qualified Lead Firearms Instructor or Department staff member.\*
5. Participants must return the proper, signed acknowledgment forms per program to participate in a live-fire activity.

*\*Please see the Live Fire Credentials listed in the appendix of this training module.*



# General Live Fire Policies

The following are policies that apply to any department program that engages in a live-fire class, activity ,or event (cont.):

6. Firearms are to be supplied/approved by the Department's Hunter Education and/or Shooting Sports Program.
7. All ammunition must be factory loads.
8. Range Masters must always be present while firing procedures are being conducted.
9. Eye and ear protection must be worn by all volunteers and shooters during firing procedures. It is strongly recommended that all spectators also wear eye and ear protection.
  - Specific range/activity rules may require this of everyone on the range.
10. Live fire activities may be conducted on any private, public,and/or indoor range.



# General Live Fire Policies

The following are policies that apply to any department program that engages in a live-fire class, activity ,or event (cont.):

11. When shooting, the ratio of 1:1, Range Coach to student, is preferred for new shooters; 1:2 is acceptable for advanced shooters.
12. Firearms shall be checked for safety and proper function and in full, safe working order before the live-fire activity.
13. Range rules shall be prominently posted during range time.
14. Participants should be restricted to a designated “waiting/spectator area” if not participating in a live-fire exercise. This area shall be clearly marked and monitored by assisting personnel.
15. Shooters shall not possess firearms or ammunition before being on the firing line/station unless under supervision.
16. A Range Incident Report must be filed with the appropriate Program Manager in the event of an incident.





# General Live Fire Policies

The following are policies that apply to any department program that engages in a live-fire class, activity ,or event (cont.):

17. Firing lines and shooting points shall be clearly marked:
  - a. All “waiting/spectator areas,” firing points, and firing lines/stations shall be clearly marked.
  - b. The use of swing stops in a shotgun live-fire activity is recommended.
18. For rifle shooting, it is recommended that all four shooting positions be practiced, starting with the prone position and working up to standing.
19. Only firearms and targets proper for range conditions and proper factory load ammunition for respective firearms shall be used during live-fire activities.
20. All persons are prohibited from the use and being under the influence of alcohol and or drugs during a live-fire activity.



# General Live Fire Policies

The following are policies that apply to any department program that engages in a live-fire class, activity ,or event (cont.):



21. Any range personnel or shooter who violates # 20 will be prohibited from participating in the live-fire class, activity, or event.
22. Smoking is not permitted during live fire.
23. No firearms handling shall occur when any person or persons are down range.
24. No person shall move forward of the firing line/station until the Range Master has given the “cease-fire/line is cold” command, actions are opened and firearms are placed on a rack or safe storage and the final command has been given to, “*go downrange to check targets*”.
25. Submit range reports to specific programs as required or applicable.

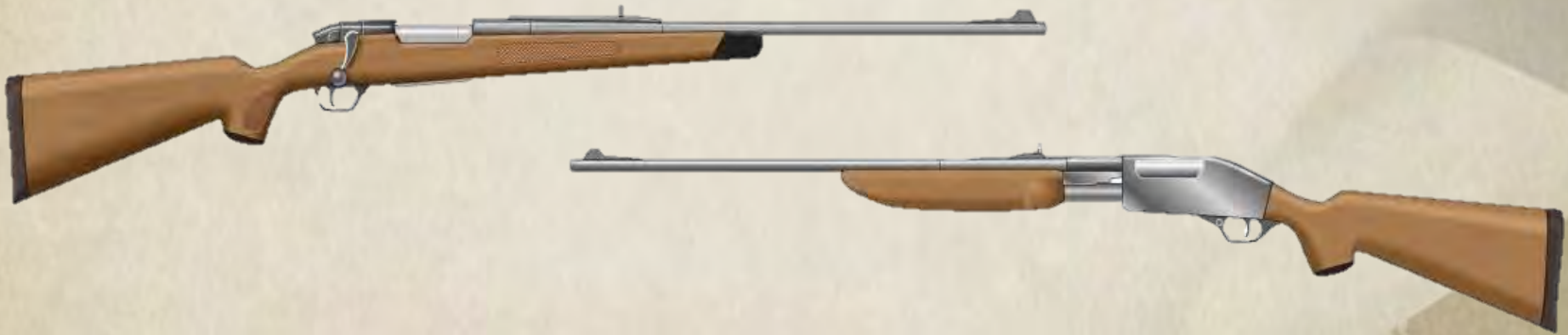


# General Live Fire Policies

Live fire programs may include one or more of the following:

- .22 rifles and pistols (rimfire)
- .410, 28, 20 or 12 gauge shotguns
- .45 or .50 caliber muzzleloaders
- .177 caliber pellet rifles

Any deviation from the above-approved firearms must be pre-approved and authorized by the Hunter Education and/or Shooting Sports Program Managers.



# Basic Range Procedures Rifle, Pistol, Muzzleloader and Shotgun

The following procedures are to be followed on the firing-line:



1. Participants shall be instructed to the specific range procedures by the Range Master. A dry run with an unloaded firearm is recommended if deemed necessary.
2. All persons on the firing line shall wear eye and ear protection.
3. Firearms shall be unloaded with actions open until firing procedures begin.
4. **Proper muzzle control shall be maintained at all times.** Failure to do so will result in removal from the live-fire activity.
5. Shooters are to be instructed when to load and when to fire.
6. Beginner shooters are to be issued ammunition a round at a time until safely-proficient. Then the shooter can be handed a magazine or multiple rounds.



# Basic Range Procedures Rifle, Pistol, Muzzleloader and Shotgun

7. The shooter is to load the firearm, place safety (if applicable) into the “safe” position, keep their finger off the trigger and wait for the “commence firing” command.
8. Shooters are to fire at a designated target only.
9. If a shooter doesn’t understand a command, they should keep the muzzle pointed down range, and raise their hand for assistance from a Range Coach.
10. If a malfunction should occur, the shooter should:
  - a. Keep the muzzle pointed down range.
  - b. Keep finger off of the trigger.
  - c. Leave action closed.
  - d. Raise hand for help.
  - e. Allow the Range Coach to correct the situation and/or remove the firearm from the range.
  - f. In the case of a misfire, the shooter should keep the firearm shouldered for 60 seconds.



# Basic Range Procedures

## Rifle, Pistol, Muzzleloader and Shotgun



11. After the firing procedure, the shooter shall:
  - a. Keep their muzzle pointed in a safe direction.
  - b. Open their action.
  - c. Wait for instructions from a Range Coach to ground the firearm or return it to the rack.
  - d. Step away from the firearm.
  - e. Wait for the *“cease-fire/range is cold”* command.
  - f. Wait for instructions to either *“exit”* the firing line or to *“go downrange to check targets”*.



# Basic Range Commands

## Rifle, Pistol and Muzzleloader

Below is a list of suggested commands to be used by the Range Master during live fire (if needed) and when to use them.

Commands:

- **Line is Hot:** firearms handling is permitted during this time. Issued when Range Coaches are ready to begin a course of fire and the range is safe. Line may then commence a shooting procedure.
- **Line is Cold:** The shooting line has finished firing and firearms are safely grounded or returned to the rack.
- **Load and Make Ready:** The line can load ammunition into their firearm and prepare for shooting.
- **Fire When Ready:** used when the shooter has loaded their firearm, has acquired their target in their sights and may shoot when ready.
- **The Line is Clear:** It is safe to go down range if needed to check targets.
- **Cease Fire:** this can be *an emergency command or a command to quit firing*. Anybody can say this command if something unsafe is observed on or down range.



# Basic Range Commands

## Rifle, Pistol and Muzzleloader

Suggested commands to be used by the Range Master during live-fire (if needed):  
Call shooters to the firing line:

*“Shooters to the line.” or “Name, Name to the line.” “The line is hot.”*

Range Master or Range Coach will explain the course of fire specific to the line and what to do in the event of a “cease fire”, malfunction or other problem.

The Range Master will ask:

*“Is the line ready?”*

If the Range Master receives a negative answer *“No”*, the Range Master will announce:

*“The line is not ready. Stand by.”*

The Range Master shall ask again:

*“Is the line ready?” “Yes” “Load and make ready.” “Fire when ready.”*

When the Range Master has observed that the shooters are complete, they will command:

*“The line is clear. Clear and ground all firearms.”*

When the line is safe:

*“The line is cold. It is safe to go down range and check/replace/reset targets.”*

At the completion of the firing procedure the shooter shall:

- Open the action.
- Place the firearm in the position as directed by the Range Coach.
- Exit as instructed.





# Basic Range Commands Shotgun

Suggested commands to be used by the Range Master on a shotgun range during live-fire (if needed).

Call a shooter to a firing station:

*“Shooter to the station.”* or *“Name, Name to the station.”* When all shooters are at their designated stations. Say *“the line is hot”* at this command shooters may call for the target, the word *“PULL”* is shouted by the shooter for the target to be released.

*“Rotate”* with actions open, shooters move to the next station to their right. The end shooter will walk to the beginning station, furthest to their left.

*“The line is cold.”* shooters shall return firearms to the rack.

At the completion of the firing procedure the shooter shall:

- Open the action.
- Place the firearm in the position as directed by the Range Coach.
- Exit as instructed.



# Basic Range Procedures Shotgun

Range Master or Range Coach will explain the course procedure and what to do in the event of a “cease fire”, malfunction or other problem.

The shooter will call “PULL” for a clay to be released.

When training a new shooter

- On the first clay, follow the bird with the hand pretending to support the fore-end of the shotgun and call out “BANG” to indicate the shot, and follow through. The instructor should hold the shotgun or this can be done before approaching the station.
- On the first clay, follow the bird with the UNLOADED shotgun and dry fire the shotgun to indicate the shot, and follow through.
- On the third clay, the Range Coach will give the shooter a shell and direct them to call for the target when ready.

At the completion of the firing procedure the shooter shall:

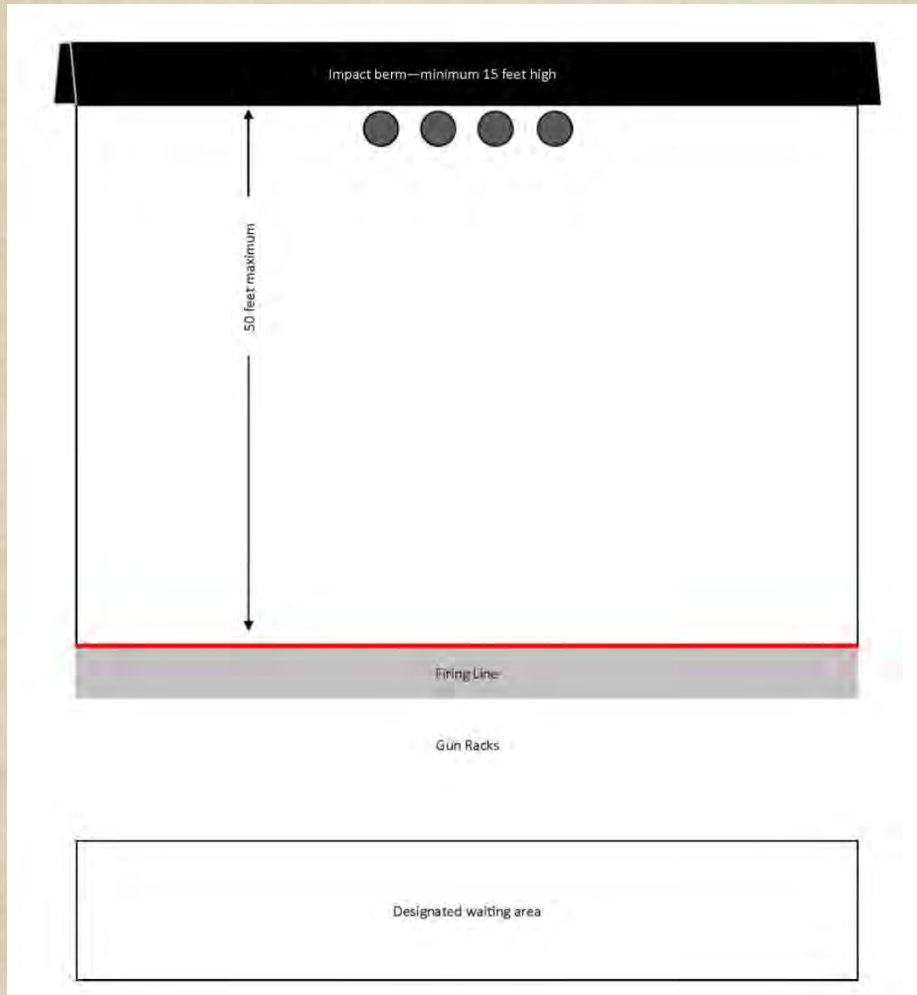
- Open the action.
- Place the firearm in the position as directed by the Range Coach.
- Exit as instructed.



# Range Layout & Protocols

## Rifle

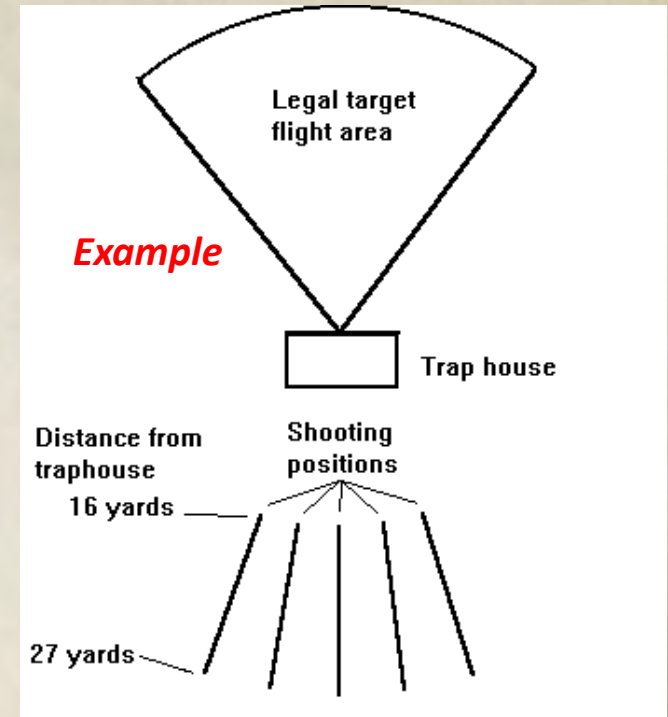
- All shooters, range help, and spectators must wear eye and ear protection while the line is “hot”.
- Follow all firearm safety rules.
- There should be a designated Range Master at all times.
- Range Coaches should work 1:1 with new shooters.
- Use standard range commands.
- Recommended target: 10” paper plate.
- No food, drinks, or smoking on the firing line.
- Wash hands & face with cold soapy water to remove any lead.



# Range Layout & Protocols

## Shotgun

- All shooters, range helpers, and spectators must wear eye and ear protection while the line is “hot”.
- Follow all firearm safety rules.
- There should be a designated Range Master at all times.
- Range Coaches should work 1:1 with new shooters.
- Swing stops are recommended if shooting on a primitive range or non-structured range.
- Use standard range commands.
- No food, drinks, or smoking on the firing line.



# Range Layout & Protocols

## Pellet Trailer

- All shooters, range helpers, and spectators must wear eye protection while in the shooter area.
  - Ear protection is not required
- Follow all firearm safety rules.
- It is recommended to have a designated Range Master at all times.
- Range Coaches should work 1:1 with new shooters.
- Use standard range commands.
- No food, drinks, or smoking on the firing line.



# Emergency Procedures for Live Fire

In the event of an incident during a live-fire activity, all range personnel needs to know and follow these recommended guidelines:

1. Ceasefire, stay in place, immediately stop shooting, and await further instructions.
2. If and when it is safe, unload firearms.
3. Evaluate the situation.
4. Designate range help to do the following:
  - i. Render first aid if needed.
  - ii. Dial 911 if needed and contact parent/guardian if not present.
  - iii. Direct medical help to the location of the victim.
  - iv. Take detailed notes for the Range Incident Report.
5. Notify the respected program manager (Hunter Education or Shooting Sports) of the incident within 24 hours or the next business day.
6. Lead Firearms Instructor and/or Range Master fills out the Range Incident Report.

Items to have on the range with you:

- Cell phone.
- First aid kit.
- At least one range volunteer to be CPR/First Aid certified, highly recommended.
- Drinking water, especially during the warmer months. It can also be used to clean hands.



# Emergency Procedures, cont.

It is also recommended to go over an Emergency Drill with your range help to ensure all are aware of their duties in the event an emergency may occur.

The following steps may help you organize your emergency response:

1. Take charge of the situation.
2. Render aid/determine if the incident is minor or major.
  - a. Minor: cut finger, scrapes, bruise
  - b. Major: broken bone, gunshot wound, heart attack/stroke

If you help render aid in an emergency, you are covered under the *Good Samaritan Law*. The keywords in this law state that you act reasonably and prudently based on the situation. Examples are if you move an injured person only if their life is in danger and ask the injured person for permission before giving aid.

3. Call for medical help, if necessary.
4. Direct medical help.
  - a. Position one or more persons at the range entrance.
  - b. Outside the building.
5. Take notes for the Range Incident Report and submit it to the proper program manager.



# Hunter Education - Live Fire Updates

**Hunter Education Instructors** - Live fire is NOT mandatory in New Mexico to complete a Hunter Education course. However, if you decide to implement a live-fire component, it becomes a mandatory class segment.

The advantage of live fire is that your students will most likely want to participate and become even more attentive and excited about Hunter Education. A bonus is that live fire can encourage students to continue activities in shooting sports.

As an Instructor, live fire provides an excellent means to evaluate a student's skill in safely handling firearms, provided they have been taught and allowed to practice proficiencies before your range time. An important point to consider if you decide to implement range training is that no other activity in Hunter Education requires or demands such a high level of Instructor supervision and judgment.

***Safety must be your number one priority.*** MARKSMANSHIP IS NOT THE PRIMARY GOAL. It is more critical that the student enjoys the experience while exhibiting responsible and safe firearms handling.





# Shooting Sports- Live Fire Updates

**Shooting Sports Instructors & Coaches** – the department requires coaches and instructors to obtain a nationally accredited certificate. It is desirable if the instructor credentials match the discipline you are instructing/coaching. The department recognizes the following:

- National Rifle Association Instructor and Coach certifications
- 4-H Shooting Sports Leader Training certifications
- NSCA/NSSA Instructor certifications
- Appleseed Instructor certifications
- Boy Scouts of America firearm instructor certifications
- USA Shooting coach certifications
- The shooting program coordinator must approve other certifications

The department offers instructor training courses throughout the year; contact the Shooting Program Coordinator for dates and locations.

***Safety must be your number one priority.***



# APPENDIX

To download or request program-specific forms, please visit one of the following department web links:

**Hunter Education Program:** <https://wildlife.dgf.nm.gov/education/hunter-education/>

**Shooting Sports Program:** <https://wildlife.dgf.nm.gov/education/shooting-program/>

Or contact a member of the Program staff:

**Hunter Education Program:** [dgf-he@dgf.nm.gov](mailto:dgf-he@dgf.nm.gov) or 505-222-4731

## **Shooting Sports**

Shooting Sports Coordinator, Cody Johnston: 505-412-7785 or [cody.Johnston@dgf.nm.gov](mailto:cody.Johnston@dgf.nm.gov)



# APPENDIX

## Live Fire Credentials for Department Volunteers

It is the recommendation of the Hunter Education and Shooting Sports Program Managers that the following criteria be established for a safe and viable live-fire volunteer program.

A volunteer seeking to be a Lead Live Fire Instructor, hereinafter Instructor, for the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish, hereinafter Department, the following credentials/certifications\* shall be obtained and current and will be recognized along with the Basic Hunter Education Instructor certification:

- Department Live Fire Instructor Training
- Active Law Enforcement
- Active Military Firearms Instructor
- Boy Scouts of America Firearms Instructor
- 4-H Firearms Instructor
- National Rifle Association Firearms (NRA) Instructor/Coach
- Concealed Carry Weapons Instructor
- Appleseed Instructor
- National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association Instructor
- NSSA/SCTP/NSCA/USA Shooting Instructor
- CMP Marksmanship Instructor
- Jr. ROTC Instructor
- Other firearm instructor credentials will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Must provide proof of training participation/credentials.



# APPENDIX

## Live Fire Credentials for Department Volunteers (cont.)

\*Any Department volunteer that participated in a Department-sponsored NRA Course from January 2012 through April 2018 shall be accepted.

For a Department volunteer to be eligible to assist during a Department-sponsored live-fire activity or event, the volunteer shall have the following:

- Be a certified Department volunteer
- Possess one of the above-mentioned instructor credentials
- Military experience may qualify based on the level of firearms experience\*

\*The Hunter Education and/or Shooting Sports Program Managers shall determine eligibility.

Current, certified Department Hunter Education Instructors who do not possess additional live-fire training may assist during a Department live-fire activity or event if under the direct supervision and/or mentorship of a qualified Lead Firearms Instructor or a Department staff member.



# APPENDIX

## Live Fire Credentials for Department Volunteers (cont.)


Additionally, it is recommended that any Department volunteer who wishes to be involved with a Department live-fire activity or event shall complete a basic online module.

The online training module will include, but may not be limited to:

- Basic firearms safety
- Range Rules
- Basic range commands
- Range layout
  - Range characteristics
- Recommended instructor to student ratios
- Emergency procedures and protocols
- Ensure that proper consent forms are complete and turned in at the time of class or activity
  - HE LF, Consent Forms, YHEC

Acknowledgment forms for Hunter Education and/or Shooting Sports Program record go to the specific Program Manager for credit and tracking.





Thank you for participating in this training, and we look forward to seeing you on a range soon!

Be sure to notify the program manager to receive credit for this training.