



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Recent Changes to New York State Firearm Laws

Basil Seggos, Commissioner

New York State recently adopted new requirements for the purchase and transfer of ownership of semi-automatic rifles and the purchase, possession, storage, and transport of firearms, rifles and shotguns in sensitive or restricted areas in New York. The following FAQs provide information on how these recent changes apply to hunting activities; additional resources for hunters and gun owners were developed by state experts and are available at:

[Resources for Gun Owners website](#) & [DEC's website](#).

Hunting

Q: How does the new gun law affect hunting?

A: The new law does NOT affect how lawful hunting may occur in New York. The law provides exemptions to allow for lawful hunting in areas otherwise restricted as a result of their listing as “sensitive” or “restricted” locations, but it may affect other activities such as transportation and storage of your hunting guns.

Q: Does the new gun law affect where I can hunt?

A: Hunting is still allowed on DEC lands. DEC Wildlife Management Areas and State Forests remain open to hunting, as are many areas of the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserves including Wilderness and Wild Forest areas. State Parks will continue to offer hunting opportunities; check their website (<https://parks.ny.gov/recreation/hunting>) for further information. For state lands managed by other agencies and other public lands, you should check with the public agency or municipality in control of the property to confirm which activities are allowed prior to hunting there.

On private lands, you must obtain personal permission from every property owner of lands you intend to hunt prior to going afield.

Q: When I am traveling to hunt by car, how do I need to store my firearm?

A: If you are going to leave your gun unattended in your vehicle, it must be locked in a fire, impact, and tamper resistant storage container and hidden from view. Any plastic or aluminum, lockable, hard-sided, gun case or safe will suffice for this purpose. If an adult remains with the vehicle to ensure security, a case or safe is not required. To prevent theft and ensure safety, we recommend always securing your firearms during transport. Local rules for traveling with firearms also apply and may be more restrictive. For example, New York City requires that all guns be unloaded, in a case, and out of sight, even when you are with the vehicle.

Q: How am I required to store my guns?

A: If anyone under 18 years of age or anyone who is prohibited from possessing a gun resides in the home, all firearms, rifles, and shotguns not in your immediate control must either be secured

with a gun locking device (trigger lock or cable lock) that makes them incapable of being fired or securely locked in a safe or secure container that is fire, impact, and tamper resistant and which is locked with a key, keypad, or combination.

Hunter Education

Q: Do the new laws affect how and where hunter education training can occur?

A: No. Possession of firearms, rifles, and shotguns is lawful for hunter education training in “sensitive locations” including schools, camps, fish and game clubs, and public libraries. As was the case prior to the recent law changes, possession of firearms and live-fire exercises associated with hunter education training may only be conducted with permission from the property owner prior to the training.

Q: Does DEC’s Hunter Education Training meet the new pistol permit education requirements?

A: No. While we always recommend hunter education courses to familiarize people with the safe handling of firearms, DEC’s courses DO NOT meet the training required to obtain or re- certify a concealed carry license at this time.

Q: Can I target shoot on DEC Lands and other public lands?

A: Target shooting at designated ranges and as part of organized shooting sport activities, including biathlon, is considered a fundamental hunting activity, important for hunting preparation and hunter education training, and is therefore lawful according to the new law. Target shooting is lawful on State Forest properties unless otherwise posted and is allowed if specifically designated as open to target shooting on Wildlife Management Areas. Most other public lands do not allow target shooting. Be sure to check with the landowner or land manager before heading afield to confirm whether target shooting is allowed on a particular public or private property. Please take note that other restrictions regarding the possession or use of breakable targets such as clay pigeons remain in place and are not permitted on State lands.

Q: Will new ammunition background check requirements be needed for DEC Hunter Education class instructors or participants?

A: Starting Sept. 13, 2023, New York State will require background checks for ammunition purchases. This background check is not anticipated to impact DEC’s Hunter Education Program (HEP). Neither instructors nor students are required to undergo background checks while participating in the program as all of the ammunition used in hunter education courses is provided by the DEC HEP regional coordinators.

Purchase and Transfer of Ownership of Semi-Automatic Rifles

Q: Can I use a semi-automatic rifle for hunting?

A: You may use a semi-automatic rifle for hunting game that may be taken with a rifle. On or after September 4, 2022, to take ownership of a semi-automatic rifle in New York you must be at least 21 years old and must first apply for and acquire a New York State semi- automatic rifle license. A person of any legal hunting age may temporarily possess/borrow a legal semi-automatic rifle for hunting.