



## **HOW TO CONDUCT COMPETITION FIRING**

***Using the 2012-2014 National Standard***

***Three-Position Air Rifle Rules***

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The **9<sup>th</sup> Edition 2012-2014 National Standard Three-Position Air Rifle Rules** that was released in September 2012 contains a major change in how competition firing is conducted. This article provides an explanation of those changes and specific guidelines for Match Directors and Range Officers to follow in conducting competition firing under these rules.

Previous rules called for sighting shots to be fired during the competition time. Shooters could take as much or as little time as they wished, within their competition time limits, to fire sighting shots. The new rules provide for separate, timed sighting stages before each record fire stage.

The fundamental reason for having separate sighting stages before record firing stages is to eliminate confusion and bring shooting more in line with other sports. All other sports events start with warm-up periods before the competition actually starts. The preparation period and sighting shots in shooting competition are in reality also warm-ups, but until now shooting has never treated them as warm-ups. That left shooting as the only sport in the world where some athletes were warming up while others were competing.

In the ISSF, we have had numerous instances of having to deal with incredulous IOC (International Olympic Committee) officials and sports writers who couldn't understand why some athletes were shooting and their scores are not counting while others' shots were counting. Part of the ISSF's efforts to make sure shooting remains in the forefront in the Olympics is to have rules that are closely aligned with other Olympic sports. In that regard, the ISSF changed its rules for the 2013-2016 quadrennial to provide for a separate 15-minute "Preparation and Sighting Time" before the start of record firing in all 10 meter and 50 meter rifle and pistol events. Time limits for those events were also shortened since sighters are now fired before and not during the competition time. National federations in countries all over the world including USA Shooting have adopted this change.



New rules for the conduct of firing place an even bigger responsibility on the Chief Range Officer who must control the timing and sequence of all firing stages.

The change to separate Sighting Stages offers a special advantage in Three-Position Air Rifle where rules allowing the coaching of sporter class shooters have caused some consternation when a coach is still working with a sporter class



shooter while other shooters were trying to shoot record shots. Now all sporter class coaching must take place during the Sighting Stage.

Detailed rules and firing procedures for conducting 3-position air rifle competitions are provided in the **2012-2014 National Standard Rules**. A wise first step in preparing to conduct competition firing with the new rules is to read Rules 5.3 and 7.4 – 7.8. Study those rules and the 3x10 and 3x20 course of fire charts that are reproduced below. Range Officers should also use the “*Firing Procedures and Range Officer Commands for Three-Position Courses of Fire*” that start on page 53 of the rulebook as their scripts for conducting firing.

3x10 COURSE OF FIRE		
STAGE	POSITION	TIME LIMIT
PREPARATION AND SIGHTING	PRONE Unlimited sighting shots	10 minutes
RECORD FIRE	<b>PRONE, 10 record shots</b>	<b>10 minutes</b>
CHANGEOVER	PRONE to STANDING	5 minutes
SIGHTING	STANDING Unlimited sighting shots	5 minutes (or 10 minutes, see Rule 5.3.1)
RECORD FIRE	<b>STANDING, 10 record shots</b>	<b>15 minutes</b>
CHANGEOVER	STANDING to KNEELING	5 minutes
SIGHTING	KNEELING Unlimited sighting shots	5 minutes (or 10 minutes, see Rule 5.3.1)
RECORD FIRE	<b>KNEELING, 10 record shots</b>	<b>10 minutes</b>

3x20 COURSE OF FIRE		
STAGE	POSITION	TIME LIMIT
PREPARATION AND SIGHTING	PRONE Unlimited sighting shots	10 minutes
RECORD FIRE	<b>PRONE, 20 record shots</b>	<b>20 minutes</b>
CHANGEOVER	PRONE to STANDING	5 minutes
SIGHTING	STANDING Unlimited sighting shots	5 minutes (or 10 minutes, see Rule 5.3.1)
RECORD FIRE	<b>STANDING, 20 record shots</b>	<b>25 minutes</b>



CHANGEOVER	STANDING to KNEELING	5 minutes
SIGHTING	KNEELING Unlimited sighting shots	5 minutes (or 10 minutes, see Rule 5.3.1)
RECORD FIRE	KNEELING, 20 record shots	20 minutes

One of the key changes in the 2012-2014 **National Standard Rules** is the introduction of a combined 10-minute Preparation and Sighting Stage before Prone Record Fire begins. This stage is preceded by a call to the firing line and a preliminary preparation period when athletes may move their equipment to the firing line and begin their preparations for the Preparation and Sighting Stage.

The descriptions that follow will walk you through how to conduct firing according to the current **National Standard Rules**. They provide a full discussion of the firing procedures and commands included in the rules. The charts (above) give the precise order and times for conducting either a 3x10 or 3x20 course of fire.

**CALL TO THE FIRING LINE (Rule 7.4).** The first step in conducting firing is to call athletes squadded on that relay to the firing line.

- Call a firing relay to the line with the command **RELAY NUMBER (relay no.), YOU MAY MOVE YOUR RIFLES AND EQUIPMENT TO THE FIRING LINE.**
- If targets were not prepared or hung in advance and it is necessary to send athletes or coaches downrange to hang targets, the full command must be **YOU MAY MOVE YOUR RIFLES AND EQUIPMENT TO THE FIRING LINE...GROUND YOUR RIFLES.**
- After determining that all rifles are grounded with CBIs inserted, the next command sequence must be **IS THE LINE CLEAR? ...THE LINE IS CLEAR...GO FORWARD AND HANG YOUR TARGETS.**
- If targets were prepared in advance, or after determining that all personnel are back from downrange, the command **TAKE YOUR POSITIONS** is given to authorize athletes on that relay to handle their rifles, lay out their equipment and begin to prepare their firing positions.
- The rules call for “a minimum of five minutes” between the **TAKE YOUR POSITIONS** command and the start of the Preparation and Sighting Stage. More than five minutes may be given, but especially if there is more than one relay, the time must be announced in advance and must be the same for all relays.
- During this five-minute (or longer) period, athletes may handle their rifles, get into the prone position and dry fire. They may not, however, remove CBIs or dry fire.





- The purpose of this five-minute preliminary stage is to give all athletes on that relay time to set up their equipment, put on their slings and begin to get into their firing positions before the Preparations and Sighting Stage starts.

**PREPARATION AND SIGHTING STAGE (Rule 7.5).** After five minutes, the Range Officer must start the Preparation and Sighting Stage.

- At the end of the preliminary stage, the command **PREPARATION AND SIGHTING STAGE...TIME LIMIT 10 MINUTES...START** must be given.
- After this command, athletes may continue to prepare their positions, but now they may remove CBIs and dry fire to perfect their positions.
- When athletes are ready to fire sighting shots, they can load and start firing. During this time, shooters may fire unlimited sighting shots, but they must complete their sighting shots within 10 minutes.
- Athletes should be encouraged to use their 10-minute Sighting Stage wisely. Some may need the full 10 minutes to prepare for record firing, while others will only want to shoot sighters for two or three minutes. They do not have to start firing sighters until later in this stage.
- After 9 minutes and 30 seconds, a **THIRTY SECONDS** warning must be given to alert athletes that the Sighting Stage is nearly over.
- After 10 minutes, the **STOP** command must be given. Range Officers must be sure to understand the difference between a **STOP** command and a **STOP-UNLOAD** command (**Rule 2.7**). When a **STOP** command is given alone, as it is here, no further firing is authorized, but it is not necessary to unload and clear rifles or insert CBIs because the **START** command for the Record Fire Stage will be given within a few seconds.
- If a range with electronic targets (EST) is being used, there must be a long enough pause between the **STOP** and **START** commands to reset the targets from SIGHTER to MATCH. On some EST ranges, it may be necessary to manually reset all targets.
- If the match includes inexperienced athletes who may not keep all their sighting shots within the paper target guard ring, the Range Officer should use a spotting scope to quickly check the targets and note any that have hits outside of the sighter guard ring. The Range Officer must mark these shots after retrieving targets and before they are turned in for scoring. Since these errant shots will have been fired during a Sighting Stage, they must not be scored or penalized (**Rule 7.14.4**). However, all shots fired outside of the sighter guard ring during a Record Fire Stage must be scored as record shots and misses.

**PRONE RECORD FIRE (Rule 7.6).** As soon as possible after the **STOP** command, the Range Officer must start the Record Fire Stage

- The prone Record Fire Stage starts with the command **PRONE RECORD FIRE...20 SHOTS IN A TIME LIMIT OF 20 MINUTES...START**. In a 3x10



event, the command is ***PRONE RECORD FIRE...10 SHOTS IN A TIME LIMIT OF 10 MINUTES...START***

- No further sighting shots may be fired after ***START***.
- The time limits for the Record Fire Stage have been reduced from what they were in previous rules because sighting shots are now fired in a separate stage.
- The Range Officer must give the five-minute and two-minute warnings.
- After 20 or 10 minutes, the ***STOP-UNLOAD*** is given. Since this is the end of a position firing stage that will be followed by a position change, it is necessary to clear and ground all rifles, with CBIs inserted.

**CHANGEOVER FROM PRONE TO STANDING (Rule 7.7).** After the ***STOP-UNLOAD*** command is given, all rifles on the line must be cleared so the changeover to the standing position can begin.

- If paper targets are used, it is necessary to go downrange and change targets. If this is the case, the Range Officer must command ***IS THE LINE CLEAR? ...THE LINE IS CLEAR...GO FORWARD AND HANG YOUR TARGETS.***
- If electronic targets are used, all targets must be reset from MATCH to SIGHTING.
- The five-minute changeover stage may not begin until all targets are prepared and all personnel are back from downrange. The changeover stage begins with the command ***TAKE YOUR POSITIONS, YOUR FIVE-MINUTE CHANGEOVER STAGE FOR THE STANDING POSITION BEGINS NOW.***
- During the changeover, athletes may handle their rifles, get into the standing position, remove CBIs and dry fire or do holding and aiming exercises. Athletes may not load, fire or discharge gas (**Rule 7.11**).
- The inclusion of a separate Changeover Stage where loading and firing is not authorized is designed as a safety feature for inexperienced juniors who need time to make position changes before any firing begins.

**SIGHTING STAGE FOR STANDING (Rule 7.8).** After five minutes, the Range Officer will start the Sighting Stage for standing.

- This stage starts with the command ***STANDING SIGHTING STAGE...TIME LIMIT 5 (or 10) MINUTES...START.***
- During this stage, athletes may continue to prepare their standing positions and, when they are ready, they may load and fire sighting shots.
- Match Directors have the option of allowing ten minutes, instead of five minutes, for the standing and kneeling position Sighting Stages. Sporter class athletes typically do not require more than five minutes to finish preparing their positions and complete their sighting shots, but many precision class athletes need a longer time to prepare. Matches may use either option, but this must be announced in advance.



- A ***THIRTY SECONDS*** warning must be given and at the end of five (or ten) minutes the ***STOP*** command must be given. After the ***STOP*** command, athletes must remain in position while the targets are reset or checked.

**STANDING RECORD FIRE (Rule 7.6).** As soon as possible after the ***STOP*** command, the Range Officer must start the Record Fire Stage.

- The standing Record Fire Stage starts with the command ***STANDING RECORD FIRE...20 SHOTS IN A TIME LIMIT OF 25 MINUTES...START***. In a 3x10 event, the command is ***STANDING RECORD FIRE...10 SHOTS IN A TIME LIMIT OF 15 MINUTES...START***.
- The Range Officer must give the five-minute and two-minute warnings.
- After 25 or 15 minutes, the ***STOP-UNLOAD*** is given. Athletes must again clear and ground all rifles, with CBIs inserted.

**CHANGEOVER FROM STANDING TO KNEELING (Rule 7.7).** After the ***STOP-UNLOAD*** command and all rifles are cleared, the changeover to the kneeling position must begin.

- If paper targets are used, the Range Officer will command ***IS THE LINE CLEAR? ...THE LINE IS CLEAR...GO FORWARD AND HANG YOUR TARGETS***.
- If electronic targets are used, all targets must be reset from MATCH to SIGHTING.
- The five-minute changeover stage may begin when all targets are prepared and all personnel are back from downrange. The changeover stage begins with the command ***TAKE YOUR POSITIONS, YOUR FIVE-MINUTE CHANGEOVER STAGE FOR THE KNEELING POSITION BEGINS NOW***.
- During the changeover, athletes may handle their rifles, get into the kneeling position, remove CBIs and dry fire or do holding and aiming exercises, but they may not load, fire or discharge gas (**Rule 7.11**).

**KNEELING RECORD FIRE (Rule 7.6).** As soon as possible after the ***STOP*** command, the Range Officer must start the Record Fire Stage.

- The kneeling Record Fire Stage starts with the command ***KNEELING RECORD FIRE...20 SHOTS IN A TIME LIMIT OF 20 MINUTES...START***. In a 3x10 event, the command is ***KNEELING RECORD FIRE...10 SHOTS IN A TIME LIMIT OF 10 MINUTES...START***.
- The Range Officer must give the five-minute and two-minute warnings.
- After 20 or 10 minutes, the ***STOP-UNLOAD*** is given. Athletes must again clear and ground all rifles, with CBIs inserted.

**COMPLETION OF FIRING.** After the ***STOP-UNLOAD*** command for the third and last position, kneeling, a few additional steps are necessary to complete firing and clear the range.



- The next commands are ***IS THE LINE CLEAR? ...THE LINE IS CLEAR...GO FORWARD AND REMOVE TARGETS.***
- After all personnel are back from downrange, the Range Officer will authorize athletes to remove their equipment from the firing line with the command ***ATHLETES, YOU MAY REMOVE YOUR EQUIPMENT FROM THE FIRING LINE.***
- Since almost all sporter and precision class rifles now are powered by compressed air or CO<sub>2</sub>, one additional command is necessary before athletes are ready to case their rifles and remove them from the firing line: ***YOU MAY DISCHARGE AIR OR GAS DOWNRANGE.*** After this command, athletes may remove their CBIs, close their rifle actions, press the trigger to discharge air or gas and immediately place the rifle in its case.
- After all equipment is removed from the firing line and the scheduled time for the next relay has arrived, the next relay can be called to the line.

These new 3-position air rifle firing procedures may seem quite different and perhaps even more complicated, but once Range Officers gain experience with them, the changes will not seem dramatic at all. The new rules make shooting a little more like other sports and they give spectators and fans competitions that are easier to understand.

When the ISSF changed its rules for the present Olympic cycle it also changed the order for firing the positions from prone-standing-kneeling to kneeling-prone-standing. The Council did not, however, adopt this change because of a concern that three-position air rifle events typically have many inexperienced competitors who still need to start firing in the prone position where they are more likely to obtain a good zero for their rifles.

Conducting 3-position air rifle events correctly and according to the new rules is greatly simplified by using a

COMMANDS FOR CONDUCTING 3X10, 3X20 AND STANDING COURSES OF FIRE	
COMMANDS AND INSTRUCTIONS	NOTES (Range Officer actions are in <b>bold</b> )
Before the competition:	Before a competition, the Range Officer must prepare the range for firing. Athletes may not move their equipment to the firing line until the Range Officer calls them to the firing line.
WELCOME TO THE (Competition Name) THREE-POSITION AIR RIFLE MATCH	The Range Officer begins each relay by welcoming the athletes and calling them to the firing line. When athletes bring their rifles to the firing line, they must ground them on their firing points with actions open and CBIs inserted.
RELAY NUMBER (Relay Number) YOU MAY MOVE YOUR RIFLES AND EQUIPMENT TO THE FIRING LINE...GROUND YOUR RIFLES	If athletes will be asked to go downrange to hang their targets, all rifles must be grounded with CBIs inserted before anyone goes downrange.
IS THE LINE CLEAR?	Range Officers must signal <b>YES</b> or <b>NO</b> to indicate that all rifles are grounded with CBIs inserted.
THE LINE IS CLEAR...GO FORWARD AND HANG YOUR TARGETS	Coaches, athletes or target handlers may go downrange to hang targets. No one may handle rifles while personnel are downrange.
After all targets are hung and all personnel are back from downrange:	
TAKE YOUR POSITIONS	After being instructed to take their positions, athletes may set up their equipment, take their prone positions and do holding and aiming exercises. CBIs may not be removed. The Range Officer should allow approximately five minutes for athletes to prepare.
After 5:00 minutes	
PREPARATION AND SIGHTING STAGE... TIME LIMIT 10 MINUTES...START	This is a combined Preparation and Sighting Stage. During this period, athletes may get into their firing positions, remove CBIs and dry fire. If athletes are new to this procedure, the Range Officer may explain that the command <b>START</b> authorizes them to load and begin firing when they are ready.
30 SECONDS	The Range Officer gives a 30 second warning after 9 minutes, 30 seconds.
After 10:00 minutes	

This is the first page of the four-page Range Officer script that should be used in conducting competition firing in 3-position air rifle. The **National Standard Rules** with these scripts can be downloaded from the CMP website at <http://www.odcmp.com/3P/Rules.pdf>.





Range Officer script. The new ***National Standard Rules*** provide a complete Range Officer script titled ***FIRING PROCEDURES AND RANGE OFFICER COMMANDS FOR THREE-POSITION COURSES OF FIRE***. Every Range Officer should download a \*.pdf version of the new rules (<http://www.odcmp.com/3P/Rules.pdf>), copy the pages with the script and place them in a notebook to use while conducting firing. Every Range Officer should work with a script even if the commands are ultimately memorized. The new rules involve some changes that will require additional attention to detail by Range Officers, but they will be quickly mastered.