

Victoria Police Manual

The Victoria Police Manual is issued under the authority of the Chief Commissioner of Police in s.60, Victoria Police Act 2013. Non-compliance with or a departure from the Victoria Police Manual may be subject to management or disciplinary action. Employees must use VPM – Professional and ethical standards to inform the decisions they make to support compliance.

Management of Victoria Police issue firearms

Context

Victoria Police members are issued with firearms to carry out their official roles and functions under the *Victoria Police Act 2013*. The compliance and governance considerations when managing firearms are significant in order to maintain safety, as well as confidence in Victoria Police's ability to manage firearms to all compliance expectations.

The responsibility of safely managing Victoria Police issue firearms falls to all employees who may issue, carry or use them in their daily duties. The focus on safety when handling a firearm in any manner cannot be overstated. This policy reflects the safest standards available to the organisation, in order to ensure the safety of our members and the public.

This policy applies to all employees who issue, handle, carry, use or are otherwise involved in the management of Victoria Police issue firearms.

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Definitions

Equipment issue officer – employee of Victoria Police who is required, as part of their duties, to issue members or PCOs with OSE.

ETMS – Victoria Police maintained equipment tracking management system.

ETMS equipment scope – is equipment defined in ETMS Operational Guidelines.

ETMS location – a work unit where ETMS has been deployed.

Policy and procedures

1. Eligibility to be issued with and carry a firearm

1.1 *General*

- Members who have successfully completed the Semi-Automatic Pistol (SAP) training course may be issued with either:
 - a personal issue firearm
 - a station issue firearm where certain requirements are met (refer to **VPM Operational safety equipment**).
- Members who have successfully completed the Semi-Automatic Rifle (SAR) User course and are gazetted to a designated SAR location may be issued with a station issue SAR when performing primary or secondary response duties.
- Members who have successfully completed the Animal Destruction Rifle Initial Users course and maintain the annual requalification may be issued with and use an animal destruction rifle.
- All members who are issued with a firearm are responsible for both:
 - the safe handling and lawful use of the firearm
 - ensuring the firearm is kept in a safe manner and a serviceable condition.
- Department heads have the authority to direct specific work units to access only station issue SAPs and to assign personal issue SAPs to members in specific circumstances. This may be appropriate where members are required to be Operational Safety and Tactics Training (OSTT) qualified but use operational safety equipment (OSE) irregularly.

1.2 *Personal issue*

- To be assigned a personal issue SAP, a member must be appointed to a position that requires them to regularly perform duties requiring the carriage of a firearm.
- Personal issue SAPs remain the property of Victoria Police at all times.
- Members can only be issued with one personal issue SAP at any time. Special Operations Group members may be subject to their own local instructions and qualifications.
- Members who have completed the SAP training course, who were not previously assigned a personal issue SAP, need to apply to the Armoury via PBEA: Armoury-Mgr when transferred to a position which meets the eligibility criteria specified above. Allocation of a personal issue SAP is to be approved by the new work unit manager. The Armoury will not issue the SAP to the member until an email verifying the member's OSTT qualification status has been sent to the PBEA by the work unit manager and a check has been done on ETMS.

1.3 *Personal issue - withdrawal*

A work unit manager may determine that a personal issue SAP should be withdrawn and returned to the Armoury. Refer to section 6 of this policy for guidance.

1.4 *Station issue Semi-Automatic Pistols*

- In addition to storing members' personal issue SAPs, work units may be issued with additional SAPs known as station issue SAPs. These may be issued to qualified members in any of the following circumstances:
 - a member's personal issue SAP is faulty and needs to be repaired
 - special events or circumstances where additional staff require OSTT equipment to be issued
 - to outstation members where the requirements of section 3 of **VPM Operational safety equipment** are met.
- Overall allocation of station issue SAPs is the responsibility of the work unit manager.
- The storage and issue of station issue SAPs must only be undertaken by work units that utilise ETMS.

1.5 *Temporary issue*

Work unit managers (or where unavailable, shift supervisors) may only approve the use of a member's personal issue SAP by another member temporarily and in exceptional circumstances. The work unit manager should:

- first try to source a station issue SAP, and only where this is not practicable authorise another member's personal issue SAP to be used
- then advise the member (in person or in writing) that their personal issue SAP was used by another member and for what purpose.

1.6 *Recruits*

- SAP training will be undertaken by recruit squads as approved by the Assistant Commissioner, People Development Command.
- Once recruits have successfully completed that training, they are eligible to carry a SAP for Designated Training Workplace duties as determined by the work unit manager. They are required to comply with **VPM Operational safety equipment** and this policy.

1.7 *Animal destruction rifle*

- Work unit managers will determine the eligibility and necessity for qualification of members in the handling and use of an Animal Destruction Rifle.
- Once members have successfully completed the Animal Destruction Rifle Initial Users course, they may be issued with and use this rifle.
- All members who are issued with this rifle are responsible for both:
 - the safe handling and lawful use of the rifle
 - ensuring the rifle is kept in a safe manner and a serviceable condition.
- This qualification lasts for one year with members required to complete the Animal Destruction Rifle User Requalification course to maintain their qualification.
- For the purpose of animal destruction, a SAR is not considered a rifle. SARs are not to be used for the lawful destruction of animals.

2. Lost, faulty or stolen Victoria Police issue firearms

2.1 *Lost and stolen*

- The employee who had possession of the firearm or discovered the loss must immediately complete all of the following:
 - advise Police Communications
 - submit LEAP reports with Victoria Police as the victim
 - report the loss/theft to the divisional commander who must forward an Incident Report to Licensing and Regulation Division (LRD), the Armoury, and the relevant Category Owner as per **VPM Firearms auditing and governance**.
- Where ETMS is available, update accordingly to ensure compliance with the end of shift count.
- Where the firearm is subsequently recovered or held as an exhibit, the investigating member must notify LRD and the Armoury, and submit a supplementary LEAP report.

2.2 *Faulty*

- Members must not attempt to fix firearms faults. Upon identifying a fault the member must:
 - immediately notify a supervisor, and
 - tag the firearm with details of the date, member name, rank, VP number, firearm serial number (where applicable) and a summary of the fault, and then return it to the equipment issue officer.
- The equipment issue officer is to secure the faulty firearm and contact the Armoury to arrange for its repair.
- If the faulted firearm is a SAP, the work unit manager must arrange for a replacement for the member until their personal issue SAP is replaced by the Armoury and where ETMS is available, ensure the SAP condition is set to faulty.
- If the faulted firearm is a SAR, the work unit manager must arrange for the SAR to be returned to the Armoury. The Armoury will be responsible for providing a replacement SAR to the work unit.

3. Transportation of firearms

3.1 *General*

- Members are responsible for keeping firearms in their possession in a manner that is safe and secure.
- When a member is not wearing the firearm as part of their equipment belt, ballistic vest, or equivalent carriage system, and is required to transport the firearm (e.g. for maintenance or transportation to OSTT training), the member must ensure all of the following:
 - the firearm must be locked in a gun safe or gun carry case with the latter being secured using the steel cable and padlocks supplied
 - ammunition must not be carried unless authorised by the work unit manager and, if authorised, kept separate from the firearm

- the most direct route available should be taken to minimise the time the firearm is in transit.

3.2 *Member transfer*

- When a member transfers to another work location, their personal issue SAP is to be transported to their new station by that member while on duty or in an approved gun carry case by another member.
- Portable and attractive equipment item registers are to be updated by the work unit managers at both workplaces.
- Where applicable the SAP should be included in ETMS immediately upon receipt as per ETMS Operational Guidelines.

3.3 *Transportation in vehicles*

- When members are transporting firearms in a vehicle for administrative purposes, the vehicle should not be left unattended.
- The person in charge of the vehicle is to ensure that all of the following occurs:
 - the firearm is locked in the gun safe or gun carry case issued to each station or work unit for that purpose
 - the carry case is secured to the vehicle using the cable and lock provided, hidden from view and placed in the boot, the cargo carrying area or some other lockable compartment of the vehicle
 - ammunition, if approved to be carried, is placed in a lockable compartment of the vehicle (other than the compartment in which the firearm is placed) or in another locked container secured in or on the motor vehicle.
- Refer to **VPM Police vehicles** for further information.

3.4 *Other means of transportation*

Where there is a need to transport firearms by means other than a vehicle, members are to ensure that all of the following occurs:

- a gun carry case is used and remains locked at all times
- the firearm does not leave the possession of the member unless it is secured in accordance with legislation
- ammunition must not be carried unless the member is fully OSTT equipped and there is a need for such ammunition carriage
- their work unit manager has given approval for the transportation.

3.5 *Bulk transportation*

- Where a number of firearms need to be transported (e.g. maintenance program, special events) work unit managers should consider the following:
 - should members be present to provide security
 - is the Transport Branch able to assist
 - is a private contractor appropriate given the circumstances.
- Further advice can be obtained from Licensing and Regulation Services Division and/or the Armoury where required.

4. Workplace Procedures

4.1 *Signing out firearms*

- An authorising employee is any employee of Victoria Police who is required, as part of their duties, to issue members or police custody officers (PCOs) with OSE.
- The authorising employee is to record the movement of all firearms in ETMS where available, otherwise in accordance with current local procedures for signing-in and signing-out of firearms.
- Members are to be issued with 30 rounds of ammunition when signing-out a SAP (15 rounds per magazine).
- Members are to be issued with 60 rounds of ammunition when signing-out a SAR (30 rounds per magazine).
- A member's personal issue SAP must not be signed-out to another member unless it is authorised by the shift supervisor (refer to section 1.5 of this policy for instructions on the temporary issue of personal issue SAPs).
- Station issue SAPs must not to be signed-out without the authorisation of the shift supervisor and are only to be issued in accordance with section 1.4 of this policy.

4.2 *Members issuing firearms to themselves*

- Members must not issue a firearm to themselves, unless one or more of the following apply:
 - in exceptional circumstances (urgent/life threatening situations)
 - when the member is the only employee on duty at the time when a firearm is required to be issued (i.e. single member stations, specialist units or 16-hour stations).
- If a member relies upon one of the above circumstances to issue a firearm to themselves, that member must:
 - make a note of those circumstances in their official diary or ePDR/VP Form 502. Where ETMS is available, it will record that the firearm has been self-issued
 - for a SAP, ensure the loading and unloading of the SAP is performed at a Safe load/unload device (SLUD) or alternate weapon loading and unloading system i.e. action wall in accordance with section 4.3 of this policy
 - for a SAR, ensure the loading and unloading of the SAR is performed at a SAR Load/Unload Booth (where available) or in a safe direction identified by the member in compliance with procedures taught at the SAR User course and in accordance with section 4.3 of this policy.

4.3 *Loading and unloading of firearms*

In accordance with OSTT, the following process must be followed when loading and unloading an SAP:

- At a SLUD or alternate weapon loading and unloading system i.e. action wall, where available, and in the manner instructed at OSTT
- Where a SLUD is not available, members must follow the procedure instructed at OSTT, including safe direction instructions
- Once the SAP is loaded, it is to be immediately holstered and secured

- Immediately after the SAP is unloaded and cleared, the chamber safety flag is to be correctly inserted into the chamber and secured by releasing the slide.

In compliance with the procedures taught at the SAR User course, the following process must be followed when loading and unloading a SAR:

- A SAR Load/Unload Booth must be used to clear and inspect the SAR, where available
- Where a SAR Load/Unload Booth is not available, members must use a safe direction identified by the member
- Immediately after the SAR is unloaded and cleared, the chamber safety flag must be inserted into the chamber.

SAR User qualified members may also use a SAR Load/Unload Booth to load and unload their SAP in compliance with the SAR User course.

4.4 *Signing in firearms*

- Firearms must be returned to the equipment issue officer at the conclusion of the shift. For carriage while off duty/on availability, refer to **VPM Operational safety equipment**.
- When members return their firearms the following is to occur:
 - all magazines and ammunition are to be returned to the equipment issue officer for storage and reissue.
 - equipment issue officers are not to accept a firearm unless the firearm is made safe and displays the chamber safety flag as stated in section 4.3 of this policy.

4.5 *Firearm storage*

- When not in approved use, firearms and magazines are to be stored in the firearms storage facility provided at stations and work units.
- A member on temporary assignment from one work location to another may relocate a SAP to their new location for the period of that assignment with the approval of the work unit managers at both locations. Both equipment registers, including ETMS where available must be updated accordingly and the Armoury notified to ensure that the SAP's current location is recorded.
- Members off duty or on availability must store all OSE at a local station unless they are able to comply with the requirements outlined in s.121(2), *Firearms Act* i.e.:
 - in the manner provided for in item 2 of Schedule 4, *Firearms Act*; or
 - in any other manner which the Chief Commissioner of Police is satisfied is as secure as the manner provided for in item 2 of Schedule 4.
- Item 2, Schedule 4(2), *Firearms Act* requires that the firearm must be stored in a steel safe which;
 - is of a thickness that is not easily penetrable; and
 - if it weighs less than 150 kilograms when it is empty, must be bolted to the structure of the premises where the firearm is authorised to be kept; and
 - when any firearm is stored in it, is locked.
- Note: s.121(2A), *Firearms Act* states that when not being carried or used, ammunition must be stored:

- in the manner provided for in item 2 of Schedule 4 (it must be stored in a locked container separate from the safe in which the firearm must be stored); or
- in any other manner which the Chief Commissioner of Police is satisfied is as secure as the manner provided for in item 2 of Schedule 4.

5. Field stripping and cleaning Semi-Automatic Pistols

- Field stripping and cleaning of SAPs should be performed as detailed in the OSTT Unit (Semi-Automatic Pistol) Manual and in the allocated safe cleaning area.
- Ammunition is not to be present during cleaning.
- Members should keep field stripping and cleaning to a minimum as it increases the potential for damage. It is recommended that SAPs are field stripped and cleaned according to the OSTT Unit (Semi-Automatic Pistol) Manual in the following circumstances:
 - after discharge when used in the destruction of an animal
 - before long term storage and when soiled (other than being fired)
 - after being exposed to water, condensation, dirt, dust or other contaminants
 - before and after firearms training.

6. Return of personal issue Semi-Automatic Pistols to the Armoury

6.1 General

- Work unit managers are responsible for ensuring that personal issue SAPs that are no longer required are sent directly to the Armoury where they will be serviced, stored and reassigned.

Action	Circumstance
Must return the personal issue SAP to the Armoury	• Has their permission to be issued with a personal issue SAP withdrawn because of disciplinary matters or legislation. • Transfers to a non-operational or non-OSTT required position. • No longer requires an OSTT qualification. • Does not require the regular carriage of a SAP to complete their duties. • Is on long term sick leave or WorkCover, if it is believed they may not return in an operational capacity. • Is no longer an employee of Victoria Police. • Has a permanent OSTT exemption.
May return the personal issue SAP to the armoury (refer to section 6.2 of this policy for further instructions when the SAP is	• Absent from work for more than six months. • Directed to perform non-operational duties whilst still owning an OSTT qualified position. • The SAP is required for the efficient and effective allocation of equipment by Victoria Police. • Not able to maintain or fails to maintain a current OSTT qualification. • OSTT qualification has been suspended (Refer to VPM Operational safety and tactics training).

not returned to the armoury)	• Fails to adequately maintain their SAP. • Has a medical certificate advising of an incapacity to be OSTT qualified.
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- Where a member's personal issue SAP is temporarily issued to another member in accordance with section 1.5 of this policy, the firearm is not required to be returned to the Armoury.

6.2 *Retaining the Semi-Automatic Pistols at the station*

- Where a decision is made not to return a member's personal issue SAP to the Armoury, the SAP must be placed in a Tamper Evident Audit Bag (TEAB) which is then sealed and placed in the safe.
- The TEAB is to be labelled 'Not to be issued unless authorised by shift supervisor' with the relevant SAP serial number inserted for cross reference.
- Where the SAP is held at a one person station, the SAP must be transferred to another work location for safe storage.

7. Safe load/unload device and SAR Load/Unload Booth

7.1 *Work unit manager responsibilities*

Work unit managers are responsible for developing processes to ensure that OSE is maintained and stored securely – refer to section 2 **VPM Operational safety equipment**. In relation to firearms, this includes:

- providing a specific location in the workplace for the safe cleaning of firearms and position of the SLUD and SAR Load/Unload Booth. The following must be considered in the placement of the SLUD and SAR Load/Unload Booth:
 - obligations under occupational health and safety legislation to provide and maintain a workplace that is safe and without risk to health
 - proximity to the firearms issue area
 - access and pedestrian traffic
 - safe direction.
- regularly inspecting the SLUD and SAR Load/Unload Booth for any damage or evidence of a round discharged into the unit (see section 7.2 of this policy for procedure where a round is discharged in the facility).
- replacing SLUDs and SAR Load/Unload Booths as required through the procurement process via Property Division.

7.2 *Regular inspection*

- If a round is discharged into the SLUD or SAR Load/Unload Booth, the work unit manager is to inspect the device for any damage to the body or the capture cone and comply with section 7.3 of this policy. The following action should then be taken:
 - where round/s fired into paper - replace the paper at the rear of the device with new unopened reams of paper
 - where round/s strike the front funnel - replace the funnel as soon as possible and continue to use the device if round has not unduly damaged the funnel. Order a new front funnel from the Property Division as soon as possible

- where round/s strike other part of the device - assess damage and replace entire device if necessary (access replacement devices through the Property Division)
- where a round strikes a panel of the SAR Load/Unload Booth – cease use, assess the damage and report to the Facilities Manager for rectification.
- The bar securing the paper in the back of the SLUD should remain locked at all times and should only be opened to inspect paper for damage or to replace paper in the situation where a round is discharged.
- The work unit manager is responsible for ensuring limited access to the padlock key for the SLUD to maintain the integrity of use.

7.3 *Unintentional discharge*

In the event that a firearm is discharged unintentionally, comply with the instructions at section 10.1 **VPM Operational safety and the use of force** to report the use of OSE and comply with **VPM Operational safety and tactics training qualifications**.

8. Specialised firearm equipment

8.1 *Modifications*

Members must not modify any operational equipment without approval - refer to **VPM Operational safety equipment**. This includes:

- removing the tactical light from the SAP (see section 8.2 of this policy for exceptions)
- adding after-market and/or non-approved ancillary equipment or accessories to SAR (e.g. slings, grips etc)
- engraving or otherwise permanently or semi-permanently marking a personal issue SAP
- placing identification labels on magazines.

8.2 *Tactical light*

- Members are not to remove the tactical light from a SAP. The exception is to change or check the batteries.
- Members are not permitted to use the tactical light for any reason other than those taught at OSTT. The tactical light is part of the firearm and therefore can only be used in circumstances where it is appropriate to draw the firearm, refer to **VPM Operational safety and the use of force**.
- Members are to either use the standard issue SAP hip/thigh holster or the approved standard plain clothes holster, otherwise they must seek approval for any alternative holster (whether with or without a tactical light). The work unit manager should then conduct a risk assessment to determine that concealment needs cannot be met with the standard issue holsters. If it is determined that the need for SAP concealment outweighs other risks (such as tactical light removal) the work unit manager is to seek approval from the Uniform, Appearance and Equipment Committee for the issue of an alternative holster in accordance with **VPM Operational safety equipment**. Members may be directed to undertake additional SAP and tactical light/torch training.

8.3 *Magazines and ammunition*

- The magazine is an integral part of the firearm system. It is to be treated as part of the firearm and not a separate item.
- Magazines are to be returned to the Armoury with the firearm as part of maintenance rotations, individual firearm returns and for firearms that have been faulted and require inspection by the Armoury.
- A firearm is to be issued with two magazines.
- Magazines may be stored in a loaded condition when not in use.
- Magazines, when first loaded for storage, must be loaded with new ammunition.
- Prior to use, the loaded magazine must be inspected to verify the number of rounds and that they have been correctly loaded.
- If there is any doubt as to the state of the magazine and its ammunition, the member must unload and reload the magazine; damaged ammunition must be replaced immediately.
- Magazine top-up ammunition is to be inspected for damage prior to use; damaged ammunition must be replaced immediately.
- Extra magazines are to be only carried in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the work unit manager (e.g. specialist duties).
- Ammunition and/or loaded magazines are to be stored in a lockable receptacle separate from firearms, aerosols and flammable goods.
- Operational ammunition must be rotated every 12 months.

8.4 *Magazine carriage*

- Members carrying a SAP are to use the magazine pouch that is issued to them, which is to be attached to their equipment belt becoming part of the standard OSE kit.
- Additional or ballistic vest pouches are only to be used for covert carriage when approved:
 - by a work unit manager
 - for general issue by the Operational Safety Division, People Development Command.
- Members carrying a SAR must carry the spare magazine in compliance with procedures taught at the SAR User course.

8.5 *Small torch*

- A personal issue small torch is issued to members as part of their minimum OSE.
- Replacement small torches will be available through Collingwood Stores and ordered via the Oracle system.
- Once issued, the small torch is to be carried whenever the SAP is carried by a member.
- If the small torch is faulty/damaged, the member may carry and use their OSTT equipment, including the SAP, for such time as it takes to replace the torch by the quickest means available.

8.6 Magazine loaders

- Magazine loaders are issued to stations and operational work units for SAP magazines only.
- Non-Victoria Police issue magazine loaders are not to be used.

9. Armoury responsibilities

- The Armoury manager is responsible for maintaining an inventory of every firearm in Victoria Police and carrying out all scheduled maintenance, servicing, repairs and warranty claims. Refer to **VPM Firearm governance and auditing** for auditing requirements.
- All operational SAPs will be scheduled for maintenance on an 18-month cycle with training weapons scheduled for maintenance on an Armoury managed scheduled cycle depending on use.
- Prior to scheduled maintenance, a fully serviced replacement SAP with the same configuration will be provided to the member. The replacement SAP becomes the member's personal issue SAP. SAPs returned to the Armoury for maintenance are serviced and then reassigned.
- In the circumstance where a member's SAP misses a routine maintenance cycle, the Armoury will contact that member to arrange for that firearm to be serviced.
- Other operational firearms will be recalled to the Armoury for maintenance and servicing in line with the Armoury managed schedule cycle and the work units' operational requirements.

Related documents

- VPM Operational safety and the use of force
- VPM Operational safety and tactics training qualifications
- VPM Operational safety equipment
- VPM Firearms governance and auditing
- VPMP Managing equipment
- VPM Police vehicles
- ETMS Operational Guidelines

Further Advice and Information

For further advice and assistance regarding these Procedures and Guidelines, contact the Centre for Operational Safety.

Update history

Date of first issue	01/03/2018	
DATE UPDATED	SUMMARY OF CHANGE	FORCE FILE NUMBER
01/03/2018	Replaces VPMG Managing Victoria Police issue firearms	FF-110217

08/04/19	Minor changes to terminology. IOEV removed and replaced with ballistic vest	FF-138597
09/06/20	Updated to support the introduction of semi-automatic rifles	FF-173057
18/03/22	Enhancements to the processes regarding storage of OSE while off duty or on availability and the roll out of ETMS	FF-193603 1
03/10/23	Minor update to VPM Operational safety and tactics training reference	N/A