

Mandatory Training for CCW

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(<http://larrycorreia.wordpress.com/2008/05/20/mandatory-training-for-ccw/>)

There was recently a discussion on THR about a newspaper article that talked about how shocking it was that CCW training in Florida was too easy. Of course, this kicked off into the inevitable argument amongst gun folks about how we have to have mandatory training vs. people who don't believe in mandatory training.

I know a little bit about this subject, and I'm against any MANDATORY training for a permit. I'm a huge fan of training, but only if you want to do it. I'm in favor of Alaska style CCW, where you don't even need a permit, you feel like carrying a gun, carry a gun.

A little background. I am a CCW instructor. In fact, as far as I'm aware, I'm the busiest instructor in Utah. I average 100-150 students per month. I certified just over 1,000 people last year, and that was with taking a couple of months off. Basically, I think that about 2% of the people carrying guns in this state were signed off on by me. So I've got a teensy bit of experience on this subject.

Utah doesn't require a shooting portion. I think that's a good thing, and here's why.

When I first started out, I did a full on basic handgun class in addition to the lecture portion that was required by the state. What I quickly discovered was the people who were going to be smart, were smart. People that were going to be stupid, were on their best behavior while I watched them, then immediately went back to being stupid when they were on their own.

Shooting is a skill that can be taught. People that want to learn, are going to learn. People with giant egos assume that what they know is good enough, and you can't teach them anything anyway.

But more distressing was the fact that shooting accurately means very little in the grand scheme of things. Don't get me wrong, being able to hit your target is important, but it pales in comparison to the importance of making good decisions. I can teach a monkey to shoot a piece of paper. Teaching you to react intelligently under stress is a whole lot harder.

The big problem? What I saw was serious lack of knowledge on the law or how violence worked. I saw this over and over again amongst people that already had their permits too, because they had gone through some cheesy instructor's wimpy course. The minimum Utah course requires a bunch of extraneous stuff that is best learned on your own, or from your owner's manual, but there is almost nothing in there about use of force, when you can shoot, why you should shoot, and absolutely nothing at all about tactics. There's no info about what to do after the shooting, nada.

I also discovered that a bunch of so called experts knew how to punch paper on the range, but knew jack squat about how violent encounters actually unfolded. Instructors like that love big qualifiers, because they can check off of a list, and feel like they're accomplishing something. Two shots, five yards. Check.

Plus, if anything, a basic qualifier gives you a false sense of security. I get this all the time when working with law enforcement. "I passed my shooting qual in POST! I already know how to shoot good!" Snort. They don't realize that the qualifier they shot was an easy test, usually designed for the lowest common denominator to pass.

So I changed my class. If a student wants to learn to shoot better, they can come with me another time and learn to shoot. But I now spend the majority of my class time going over use of force, decision making, and the stuff that keeps you A. alive and B. out of jail.

As far as I know, I'm the only Utah instructor that uses a role playing session. I do it to challenge the student's preconceived notions of how "their gunfight" is going to unfold. (usually it is some variant of them being John McClane). I've lost track of how many times I've had somebody who's already been through CCW classes come up to me afterward and comment about how eye opening that was.

Super in-depth qualifiers assuage the conscience of bureaucrats, and that's about it. The article in question points out that police have lousy hit ratios. Well, that's because gunfights are HARD, and also, most of the cops with the lousy hit rate's training is basically the same type of BS qualifiers that the bureaucrats want to force on CCW holders.

The vast majority of the time, just producing the gun solves the problem for the permit holder, or the violent encounter is so close that you can just jam the muzzle into the bad guy's chest. So why exactly should we put some extra hoops for the permit holder to jump through, that don't really matter, don't really help, and just cause one more expense to getting the permit to begin with?

And if you've already got the law written so that it requires a shooting portion, what is to keep some future anti-gun bureaucrat from tweaking it so that the test is so difficult that nobody can pass it? And even if it is only as difficult as the qual for say, the Air Marshals, and you personally are a bad-ass gunslinger killer of cardboard, do you want to force that requirement on your mom or your grandma? Sorry, Mom, you don't get to carry a gun to use at conversational distance against a rapist, because I don't FEEL safe knowing you can't shoot the Seal Team Six pistol qual.

That's basically what this fixation on mandatory training comes down to. Feelings. We've got some people on our side that are no different than the anti-gunners who want to ban everything because it makes the FEEL unsafe. Well, they only want to bar admittance to their secret-club to anybody who isn't quite as good as they are, because they FEEL that's unsafe.

Okay, regardless of your feelings, show me the numbers. If mandatory training makes a huge difference in safety, how come Alaska and Vermont, with no training, are about the same as Utah with 4 hours, or states like Arizona with a mandatory (if I recall correctly) 16+ hours of training?

Also note, that the people who are in favor of more training and tougher tests, don't want to set the bar so high that they can't personally reach it. They would much rather set the bar just below what they can do, because obviously, that's how proficient you should be. Anybody who can't shoot as good as they can is obviously a menace to society.

The next time somebody tells me some nonsense like that, I'll tell them sure, only I think you should shoot at least as good as me, and odds are that since I'm a fanatic, and I can easily outshoot you, no permit for you. On the new mandatory Correia Test, the permit holder has to be able to shoot at least Expert on an IDPA classifier, while wearing a backpack loaded with eighty pounds of cinderblocks, while teenagers pelt you with rotting fruit, and listening to Barry Manilow records... BACKWARDS! I figure that will take it down from 115,000 CCWs to where there are only about fifty or so people carrying guns in Utah. That should keep the riff-raff out. Because you know, then I would *feel* safe.

Nope, no mandatory training at all. Zip, nada. In fact, I've already volunteered to testify before the state legislature as a subject matter expert should the issue of Alaska/Vermont style carry make it out of committee again. I'll take the pay cut in exchange for freedom.