



**POLAR
TOURISM**
Guides Association
guiding guiding

TRAINING COURSE SYLLABUS

Firearm Skills for Polar Bear Environments (FSPBE)

2022 Edition

DEFINITIONS:

Scope: Outlines who the course is for.
Element: Outlines the overall **skill set** to be taught.
Range: The **specific skills** to be taught.

PREREQUISITES: Current First Aid Certificate

SCOPE:

Firearm Skills for Polar Bear Environments is a training syllabus relevant for any guides, field staff, scientists or personnel who guide people or work in polar bear environments individually or with groups of peers or clients who are required to carry and know how to use a firearm to potentially kill a polar bear.

Gaining this award on its own does not qualify someone to be operative in polar bear environments as a guide or bear guard/monitor. This award is designed optimally as an partner award with the **Operations in Polar Bear Environments (OPBE) award**. Ideally the two should always be considered together.

Anyone representing this award must fully understand the significant responsibility of handling a firearm, including the potential consequences of carrying out the act of killing a polar bear.

- Special Notes:*
- i. *This award is useful and valid for private individuals such as yachties and hikers.*
 - ii. *Flare pistols are a commonly used non-lethal deterrent but are not considered mandatory by all relevant jurisdictions.*
 - iii. *The Elements may be taught/presented in any order.*
 - iv. *There are a range of terms internationally for the state of 'filling the firearm magazine while making sure the chamber is empty with the safety catch in the on/safe position'. PTGA accepts 'half-loaded' and 'safe-loaded' as the same state.*
 - v. *The PTGA always considers awareness, avoidance and prevention. The safety of the bear and non lethal deterrent strategies are always a PTGA guide's priority in the event of an encounter that has transcended all other management options taken prior to that event.*
 - vi. *PTGA is not, and can not be, considered responsible for any incident involving firearms occurring after this award has been given. The assessment or judgment of competency by a qualified trainer is only a snap-shot view in which a successful candidate has shown and proven competency. Anyone holding this award has been judged competent at the time of training. Firearms are inherently dangerous and must be treated as such at all times.*

REVALIDATION: A guide who holds the PTGA FSPBE award must shoot and log a minimum of 20 rounds of ammunition per annum using a firearm suitable for polar bear protection. This log to be submitted annually for inclusion in a guide ProFile. A guide who does not meet this is not considered valid but may revalidate using this means anytime within a 2 year period. Furthermore anyone holding this award must be assessed competent in sub-element **4.3** every 4 years.

ELEMENTS & PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:

A candidate under instruction must show 100% adherence to internationally acknowledged rules for firearm safety:

1. Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.
2. **Always** point the firearm in a safe direction. Never ever point it at a person – ever.
3. Keep your finger off the trigger and out of the trigger guard until you are ready to shoot.
4. Know what is beyond your target.

** Contravention of acknowledged safety rules means an automatic expulsion from the course.*

Element 1 – Understanding the characteristics and task suitability of relevant firearms and ammunitions

Range: Action types, cartridge (calibre), terminal ballistics and effective range.

Element 2 – Preparing a firearm for field operations

2.1 Preparing a firearm for use

Range: Correct firearm, performing safety checks, confirming correct ammunition and sufficient quantity, packaging firearm and ammunition for given conditions, travel modes and access.

2.2 Loading options

Range: Unloaded, half-loaded and ready to shoot.

2.3 Firearm carrying options/strategies

Range: Continuous muzzle control, ability to be hands free and efficient recovery for use.

Element 3 – PBE firing positions and advantages and disadvantages of each

Range: Standing and kneeling.

Element 4 – Shooting the firearm: knowledge and performance

4.1 Bear anatomy and optimal shot placement on the animal

Range: Front on, ¾ on and side on.

4.2 Common aiming concepts

Range: Sight alignment and sight picture.

4.3 Firearm carrying options/strategies

Range: 4 rounds in 20 seconds all inside a 45cm (18") circle at 25–30 metres (27.3–32 yards).

Starting with firearm in chosen carry position.

4.4 Common firearm malfunctions

Range: Jams, hang fire, squib load and safety catch malfunction.

Element 5 – Knowledge of post shooting actions and shot/killed animal protocol

Range: Safely confirming the animal is dead and continued observation, care for the shooter, documentation requirements and acquiring knowledge of local authority or community requirements for a defense-killed bear.

Element 6 – Unloading the firearm

Range: Assessing environment, removing ammunition, firearm safety checks, stowage options for firearm and ammunition, and management of damaged, soiled or wet ammunition.

Element 7 – Post use firearm care

Range: Firearm break-down, cleaning and maintenance methodology, and storage protocol.

DATE:	REVIEWERS:
2019	original draft prepared by Graham Charles
2019	Doug Gould
Sept 2020	Graham Charles, Ben Jackson
Nov 2020	Graham Charles, John Rodsted, Michael Gizberg, Jim Mayer, Franka Leiterer, Sara Orstadius, Ben Jackson (EGA)
June 2021 & 2022	Al McFeeters
May 2022	Qualification Review Meeting