

# FIREARMS SIMULATOR SAFETY!

### AN UPDATE TO KENTUCKY LAW ENFORCEMENT ON FIREARMS TRAINING SAFETY

Never have police officers been under more scrutiny by the public and media.

To help address this reality, the Kentucky League of Cities Insurance Services Loss Control Law Enforcement Program offers intensive firearms simulator training to law enforcement officers across Kentucky. While the objective is to enhance safety and decision-making skills in real-life situations, participants must also be vigilant with safety protocols during training.

The KLC Insurance Services program has been providing firearms simulator training to our participating police departments for more than 15 years. The virtual simulator provides realistic scenarios to which officers practice responses. We believe part of our success in minimizing risk exposure and lowering officer injuries is due in large part to this program.

The program continues to develop and is grounded in a holistic approach to training. It utilizes Ti Training, an industry leader in firearms simulator training.



The program provides a variety of training scenarios. Ten new, timely scenarios are added annually to target specific training objectives which are based on actual responses to resistance situations. The scenarios are embedded with videos, policies, and legal talking points to ensure officers make ethical decisions when using force.

The training uses all the responses to resistance options and involves de-escalation using voice commands as well as the use of force to include OC, TASER, baton, pistol, shotgun, and rifle.

KLC Insurance Services partners with 45 host law enforcement sites across the state that agree to

train agencies in their geographical area. The host sites are required to send an instructor to a yearly instructor's course provided by KLC Insurance Services. Ti Training assists in the annual training and provides expert trainers in various specialty areas.



The instructor course is taught by our state's leading use of force expert, Major Alex Payne of the Jeffersontown Police Department (retired KSP). In addition, Lieutenant Rodney Sherrod of the Lexington Police Department assists with the class and is the founding member of the Kentucky Tactical Officers Association, which was created to improve the tactics and training of SWAT teams across the state.

Training instructors are provided manuals, given talking points for all the scenarios, and briefed on safety protocols and operations of the systems.

#### **Safety First – On the Street and in the Classroom!**

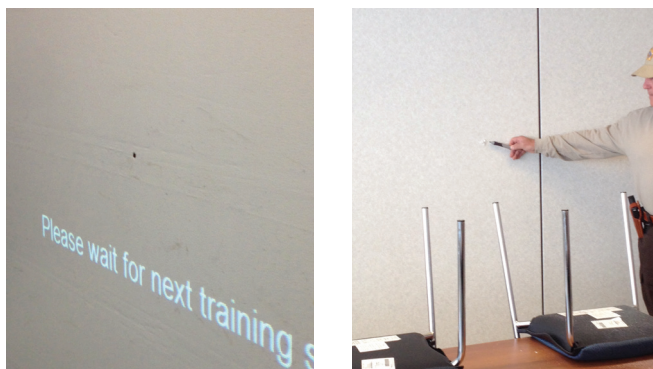
It is important to constantly reinforce safety at all levels of training, whether it be during instructor training or training with officers and agencies. Safety is the responsibility of instructors and participants.

In 2015, a simulator in Kentucky not owned by KLC Insurance Services and an instructor not insured or trained by our program had an accidental shooting. The instructor had secured his weapon in the morning

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session. However, as with most training accidents, he failed to secure the weapon when he returned from lunch. When the instructor pulled his pistol thinking it was a training weapon, he fired at the screen.



The bullet went through the screen, through a wall, into an unoccupied classroom, and into an office before striking a wall approximately three feet from a secretary sitting at her desk. Ironically, the bullet hole was just above a “Think Safety” sign. Ten minutes before the accidental discharge, a pregnant coworker had been standing in the direct path that the bullet traveled.



This accidental shooting resulted in KLC Insurance Services conducting a review of all safety protocols.

The first step was a review of all simulator training accidental discharges and the reason for the incidents. We reviewed incidents that occurred during KLCIS training, private simulator manufacturers, federal, police, sheriffs, and independent contractors that provide simulators.

There have been other incidents involving accidents.

### Incident #1

Officers secured their weapons in a locked gun cabinet. The training area was in the underground of a government building. The gun cabinet was located just inside the door.

The officer entered the room, secured his weapon, and completed the training with the training officer. After completing the training, the officer retrieved his weapon from the gun cabinet. He did not leave the room. He returned to the training area intending to talk to the instructor until the next scheduled officer arrived.

When the next scheduled officer never arrived, the trainer allowed the officer to run through additional scenarios, forgetting that he had retrieved his service weapon and returned to the system.

One shot was fired through the screen. Fortunately, the screen was placed in front of a cinder block wall.

### Incident #2

The second incident occurred as two trainers were discussing the instructional points of the scenarios that would be used in their agency’s training. The two had intended to just view the scenarios without utilizing any of the system weapons. Neither officer had secured their service weapon.

During their review, one officer became so involved in the scenario that he pulled his pistol from the holster and fired one shot through the screen.

### Incident #3

Several officers working the midnight shift were utilizing scenarios relating to response to active shooters. Signs had been placed on entry doors to the training area prohibiting weapons in the room.

The officers entered the room with their weapons. Their weapons were placed on a table near the simulator. An officer who had been firing the system’s AR-15 mistook his or one of the other officer’s pistols for a system pistol when going to another scenario. He fired one shot through the screen. Fortunately, the screen was against a block wall as an occupied office was on the other side of the wall.

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### The Need for Ongoing Improvements

KLC Insurance Services has had several safety protocols in the past, but we can continue to learn from others. There were numerous documented incidents from across the country where instructors and/or students picked up a weapon in the training room, believing it was a training weapon, which resulted in the shooting of the screen. In several of the incidents there were no block walls and rounds penetrated the training room walls, which could have resulted in someone being killed.

During another demonstration session for the public, an observer standing near the rifle case picked up the officer's actual pistol and pointed it at another observer thinking it was a training weapon. Luckily another officer on site responded before a tragedy occurred.

This incident resulted in requiring all pistols to be locked in patrol cars before entering the training area. However, we were informed that a department following the same protocol in another state had an active shooter at the training location and the officers could not get to their weapons.



This resulted in KLC Insurance Services purchasing a pistol safe for each of our three systems that are taken to training sites. Officers are required to secure pistols, magazines, TASERS, and OC spray in the safety box. Even after

implementation of this protocol an officer failed to secure his weapons and fired a round through the screen.

From reviewing numerous simulator accidental shootings, it is clear that accidents can happen regardless of the protocols established.



### Updated KLC Insurance Services Requirements

The bottom line is that KLC Insurance Services constantly monitors safety at firearms safety events. One important step taken

is the requirement that the wall behind the simulator screen is capable of stopping a bullet (block wall).

KLCIS has implemented the following requirements and reminders for all firearms simulator training:

- Instructors must review, emphasize, and follow training protocols.
- Locations are required to have a concrete wall behind the simulator screen.
- Instructors must not allow any weapons in the secure training area. Signage (provided by KLC Insurance Services) must be posted (see next page).
- Weapons must be locked in KLC Insurance Services-supplied pistol safes.
- There is an ongoing need for heightened vigilance, especially after lunch when most of the training accidents occur.

KLC Insurance Services believes that firearm simulators are very valuable in assisting officers in using ethical, proper use of force, reducing risk exposure to the department, and increasing safety. With this in mind, we must continue to strive to make training safe.

Contact John Clark or Brian Nunn with KLCIS at 800.876.4552 with questions or feedback.



### Questions? KLC is here to help!

Please contact John Clark (jclark@klc.org) or Brian Nunn (bnunn@klc.org) with KLC Loss Control Law Enforcement at 800.876.4552 or visit [klc.org](http://klc.org) for more information.



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