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10 Tips to Run Your 1911 Like a Pro



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PHOTOS BY RICHARD MANN



SAAMI

SAAMI is the acronym for the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute. It is an association of the nation's leading manufacturers of firearms, ammunition and components.

Founded in 1926 at the request of the federal government, SAAMI was tasked with creating and publishing industry standards for safety, interchangeability, reliability and quality, coordinating technical data and promoting safe and responsible firearms use.

The organization is frequently mentioned in firearms periodicals and books, but many shooters

When SAAMI approves a cartridge, a print—like this one for the .300 AAC Blackout—detailing all the relevant dimensions is made available to ammunition manufacturers to help them create serviceable ammo. In addition to this print and a chamber print, SAAMI also establishes a maximum average operating pressure for the cartridge.

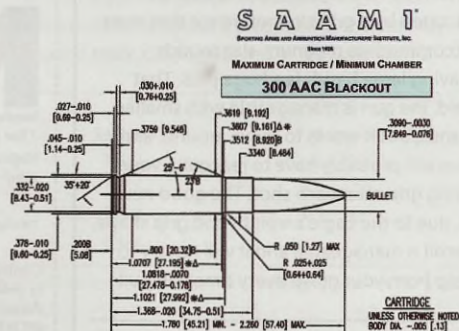
There is a lot that goes into developing a new cartridge or even standardizing one that has been around for a while like the .300 Whisper/.300 AAC Blackout. SAAMI helps make sure all of the firearms and ammunition for any SAAMI-approved cartridge are compatible.

don't understand the purpose and function of SAAMI. More importantly, they don't realize how SAAMI impacts the enjoyment of their favorite pastime.

At the basic level, SAAMI works to ensure when you purchase a box of .308 Win. ammunition, for example, every cartridge will safely chamber and fire in any firearm intended to work with that particular cartridge. This may not seem all that complicated, but with a bottleneck rifle cartridge like the .308 Win. there are more than 20 critical dimensions, and the dimensions of the cartridge must correlate to the firearm's chamber dimensions.

This task is further complicated by the fact that ammunition and the chambers cut into barrels cannot all be identical. It is physically impossible to mass produce both ammunition and firearms without minute variations. Therefore, not only must the cartridge and chamber dimensions be standardized, so must the allowable tolerances. SAAMI approves and sets these dimensions and tolerances.

Ammunition must also function safely. This is primarily controlled by the pressure a cartridge generates when fired. SAAMI recognizes two pressure-measuring systems. The preferred is the piezoelectric transducer system, where pressure is measured in pounds per square inch (psi). The other, older system is the copper crusher method, where pressure is expressed in copper units of pressure (cup). SAAMI establishes a maximum average pressure (MAP) for all commercially loaded, SAAMI-approved cartridges. A lot of factors, including the workings of a math problem as complex as your tax return, go into determining the MAP for each cartridge. Most importantly, the MAP is set at a level considered safe for the weakest firearm manufacturer for a particular cartridge.



This is why SAAMI serves as source of contention for some shooters. Some older cartridges are actually capable of much improved performance, but are limited to a certain MAP by SAAMI due to older firearms chambered for these cartridges still in circulation. The .45 Colt is a perfect example. SAAMI set the MAP for the .45 Colt at 14,000 psi, but this cartridge can safely be loaded to higher pressures in modern revolvers from Smith & Wesson and Ruger, or Marlin lever-action rifles. However, since manufacturers cannot control the quality of firearms into which consumers will load their ammo, SAAMI set the pressure limit low to keep folks from permanently disassembling guns and donning an eye patch as part of their daily ensemble. These same pressures are also adhered to by companies that publish handloading data manuals.

Membership in SAAMI is voluntary. Not all American firearms and ammunition manufacturers belong to or adhere to SAAMI standards, and not every company

tests its ammunition using one of the two aforementioned SAAMI-approved pressure-testing methods. This does not mean the ammunition produced by these companies—that mostly offer specialty loads and cartridges—is unsafe. After all, handloaders are not SAAMI members and unless you are a very wealthy handloader, chances are you don't have a piezoelectric transducer or copper crusher pressure-testing system in your garage.

For example, Buffalo Bore Ammunition offers a Heavy .32 H&R Mag. +P load utilizing a 130-grain, hard-cast Keith-style bullet with a muzzle velocity of 1,125 fps. This load is substantially more potent than any .32 H&R Mag. ammunition loaded to the SAAMI MAP of 21,000 cup, and even more powerful than .38 Spl. +P ammo. The SAAMI limit for .32 H&R Mag. was set due to the original, weakly constructed H&R revolvers manufactured for this cartridge. To be safe, Buffalo Bore prints a warning on every box of "Heavy" .32 H&R Mag. ammo that reads, "For use in all firearms

chambered for .32 H&R Mag. except H&R revolvers. Not for use in H&R revolvers."

Handcrafted cartridges (known as wildcats) are seldom if ever submitted to SAAMI for standardization. This can lead to confusion down the road, and the .300 AAC Blackout is a perfect example. This cartridge is probably better known as the .300 Whisper, the first in a series of subsonic/supersonic wildcat cartridges developed by J.D. Jones. However, Jones never submitted the .300 Whisper to SAAMI, and he considers it a proprietary design.

Looking to develop a subsonic/supersonic cartridge, Advanced Armament Corporation (AAC) in partnership with Remington, did a lot of tinkering with the .300 Whisper cartridge and the corresponding chamber dimensions to maximize its performance in the AR-15 platform. They submitted their version—which they named the .300 AAC Blackout—to SAAMI,

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Not all ammunition manufacturers adhere to SAAMI specifications. This Heavy .32 H&R Mag. +P load from Buffalo Bore is a perfect example. It is loaded to a pressure in excess of the SAAMI MAP, but a warning posted on the cartridge box spells out the handguns in which it should not be used.

which approved the cartridge at a MAP of 55,000 psi.

Here's where it gets weird. Remington now offers both subsonic and supersonic factory-loaded ammunition for the .300 AAC Blackout. Hornady and Cor-Bon both catalog subsonic and supersonic versions of .300 Whisper ammunition, but Hornady indicates its .300 Whisper ammo will function in .300 AAC Blackout rifles. Remington .300 AAC Blackout ammunition might work in .300 Whisper rifles and Cor-Bon .300 Whisper ammo might work in .300 AAC Blackout rifles. This can all be confusing and problematic. It does, however, highlight one of the reasons SAAMI was established in the first place.

In addition to ensuring ammunition and firearms compatibility, conformity to SAAMI specifications provides manufacturers with some degree of liability protection when defending against frivolous lawsuits. SAAMI is also involved at the legislative, law enforcement and regulatory level to ensure lawmakers, enforcement officials and various agencies are operating with accurate technical information.

For more information about SAAMI, to see a list of member companies or to view SAAMI-approved cartridges, chamber prints and other related information, you can visit its website by logging onto www.saami.org.

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