



**IRISH AIRSOFT
ASSOCIATION**

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Proposal to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
regarding legislative changes to the Criminal Justice Act 2006.

December 2008

A foreword.

The purpose of this document is to provide a single text, from which all of the policy and information required to understand the airsoft question, the community behind it and the solutions that community feel will work can be drawn.

It represents the culmination of two years input from interests social, economic, legal and political. The word of mouth and zeitgeist generated by the participants in the legitimate pursuit of airsoft are represented herein as are the concerns, motives and contributions from the vested interests such as retailers and venues – all of whom have taken it upon themselves, without prompting by the government, to organise a system within which they can express themselves freely through the medium of their choice: in this case airsoft.

The IAA and the entire airsoft community would urge all who read this to do so with an open mind and to approach the subject with rationality rather than preconditioned prejudice. The facts are not disguised, the prose is blunt and the conclusions are without hyperbole in order to present things as clearly as possible.

Airsoft in Ireland (as it exists today) is an organised democratic sport adopting both a traditional and non-traditional competitive stance. There are more than five hundred known airsofters [sic] and more than a thousand believed to be active in the state. The community comprises participants from the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland United Kingdom, the Philippines, Peoples Republic of China, Lithuania, Poland, France, the Netherlands, Germany and the United States (taken only from the IAA membership records) as well as including marginalised groups such as the physically disabled, the unemployed and young people in difficult circumstances – bringing together people who would previously never have intermixed. Players and commercial interests have raised more than €2000 for Temple Street Childrens Hospital. The sport is recognised in more than 50 countries and the IAA is recognised and consulted by groups and clubs in Portugal, Holland, Canada and Malta. The sport supports nearly a dozen businesses including dedicated retailers, gaming venues, repair shops and (soon) a number of magazine publications and event-management companies.

Airsoft has done all this in a little more than two years. There is no reason that in Ireland it could not do even more.

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An introduction to airsoft

The IAA would like to thank the recipients and readers of this document for taking the time to give the issues specific to airsoft consideration.

What is airsoft

Airsoft is a modern hybrid sport combining the tradition of competitive “tag” sports with re-enactment and living history into a unique passtime.

Airsoft devices were developed in Japan around the 1970's to circumvent the tight restrictions placed by the Japanese Swords and Firearms laws (which have their roots in the WW2 peace agreement) which prevented civilian ownership of firearms. Due to the low muzzle energy (the energy of a projectile as it leaves the barrel) and equally low kinetic energy transfer (the ammount of energy imparted to a surface on impact) it was possible for the devices to be used in tag-games similar to paintball without the potential for serious personal injury.

Airsoft equipment takes the form of highly detailed and accurate replicas of real-world firearms which are capable of propelling a light, low velocity, plastic spherical projectile by means of a number of different mechanisms (see “*Explanation of airsoft equipment*”)

In the Republic of Ireland. Airsoft is a fairly new phenomenon having only recently become a feasible pursuit with the introduction of the Criminal Justice Act of 2006.

In 1964, airsoft devices were deemed to be firearms by the 1964 Firearms Act which read:

2. —(1) In the Principal Act and this Act, "firearm" shall include an airgun (which expression includes an air rifle and an air pistol) and any other weapon incorporating a barrel from which metal or other slugs can be discharged and a prohibited weapon

The 2006 Criminal Justice Act altered the Firearms Acts in Ireland. According to the *Criminal Justice Act 2006, Part 5 “ammendments of Firearms Acts”, Section 26 “Ammendments of section 1 of the Principal Act”* a firearm is now defined as (at least in relation to airguns):

an air gun (including an air rifle and air pistol) with a muzzle energy greater than one joule or any other weapon incorporating a barrel from which any projectile can be discharged with such a muzzle energy,

According to this legislation any device (such as an airsoft device) whose muzzle energy is at or below 1 joule is not considered a firearm and therefore legal to import, retail, purchase and operate without restriction within the Republic of Ireland.

Specifically, 1joule was set as the limit due to the findings of the British House of Commons (*Home Affairs Second Report, 6 April 2000, appendix 1, section B*) which noted that spherical projectiles impacting with an energy of less than 1.35joules were “incapable of penetrating even vulnerable parts of the body, such as the eye” and from the forensic study (*Control of Firearms in Northern Ireland and the Draft Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, paragraph 32*) which noted that minimum energy required to cause a penetrating wound lay between 2.2 and 3.0ft/lb (foot pounds) or 3 – 4 joules.

The Irish Airsoft Association

Founded in 2006 after changes in the applicable legislation and constituted as the de facto governing body for the sport by its membership at its first annual general meeting (December 12th, 2007) the Irish Airsoft Association is a non-profit, voluntary organisation dedicated to protecting the interests of the airsoft community and encouraging the responsible growth of the pursuit.

The IAA membership is made of every interested group within the airsoft community (players, commercial interests etc) and has advocated the voluntary adherence of its membership to agreed standards (see attached documents; Retailers Regulations, Venue Regulations and Code of Conduct). The IAA constitution, code of conduct etc has been used as the model for a number of foreign organisations (Malta & Portugal) and has been instrumental in the association becoming an all-Ireland representative body (including Northern Ireland pending minor changes to the IAA Constitution).

The stated objective of the IAA is to ensure the continued existence, freedom and growth of the community in the whole of Ireland and to protect the rights of its members to practice their chosen sport without interference where they themselves do not interfere with others.

Understanding Airsoft and Airsoft Devices.

In attempting to analyze the question of airsoft, how it relates to the concerns of the state and what its community have a preference for it is necessary to outline what airsoft is in general terms with explanations of the terminology (found in the glossary of terms section), the equipment used, that equipments potential and characteristics and the use that equipment is put to.

Airsoft Devices

(aka AEG's, GBB's, EBB's, NBB's, Springers, BB Showers, mines, grenades etc)

Airsoft devices are the main tool of the airsoft sport. At first glance these appear to be highly realistic copies of real world firearms – and in terms of their aesthetic qualities that is not an inaccurate statement. However, airsoft equipment is specifically designed to be incapable of causing any kind of lethal or severe wound due to the intention of using them in tag-games and “skirmishing”. These devices come in a number of different flavours each of which operates under a specific set of engineering principals but all have a single component in common, the projectile is always either a 6mm or 8mm plastic BB and in the Republic of Ireland every legally held device will produce no greater than 1joule of muzzle energy.

6mm & 8mm airsoft BB

The standard airsoft round is a sphere of plastic polished to a smooth finish with a diameter of between 5.87mm and 5.98mm. These come in a variety of weights (altered by density of the material used for their manufacture) ranging from the widely seen 0.12g type¹ to the standard 0.2g type to the more uncommon 0.34g and 0.46g type favored by precision enthusiasts.

Each of these different weights of airsoft BB will behave differently in flight, most notably a better resistance to air currents the heavier the weight you use (and a corresponding decrease in range and velocity). The import point to note is that while the characteristics of the BB may change, unlike a firearm where a chemical charge is ignited to propel the round, the power in airsoft equipment is generated inside the mechanism of the device itself and thus no airsoft BB can have more energy than is produced by the device i.e. 1Joule.

So-called “metal pellets” or “steel BB's” do exist however these are usually intended for use in actual “BB Guns” (which will be discussed later) and are not suitable for use in airsoft devices. The 1 joule limitation in

¹ 0.12g are often supplied with low quality spring powered devices and are not suitable for use in standard airsoft equipment. Legitimate airsofters avoid 0.12g BB's due to the damage they can cause to internal components.

Irish law precludes their use as ammunition for the regular player as it is insufficient to propel them with force or velocity enough to be useful for either skirmishing or target shooting.

AEG's or Automatic Electric Guns

The workhorse of the airsoft world is the AEG or Automatic Electric Gun. The first of these were produced in the late 1980's by the Tokyo Marui company of Japan, where the arms limitations treaties signed after the second world war meant that the Japanese citizenry were prevented from owning actual firearms. Originally these products were all built from polymers and ABS plastics however, since the 1990's they have been produced using metals of varying quality and composition. Their appearance, based on real world counterparts ranges from being quite clearly imitation at the low end of the scale, to being nearly indistinguishable at the high end (we say "nearly" because anyone familiar with either airsoft devices or real firearms would see the obvious differences, i.e. the inner barrel of an airsoft devices, the major differences in the loading mechanism in the magazine well, the trigger pull, force required to pull the cocking handle, even the aesthetics of airsoft grips are commonly wider than those found on real firearms due to the necessity to fit a motor inside it).

The internal mechanism of an AEG uses a "gearbox" design, this gearbox consists of a piston which is pulled back by a set of gears which are in turn powered by a DC motor. As the piston is pushed back, it compresses a spring, upon reaching the maximum compression, the piston is released and propelled forward by the force of the compressed spring behind it. This forces a small amount of compressed air out of the front of the gearbox. This air then travels through the hopup mechanism of the AEG where a BB will have previously been loaded from the magazine, this air then propels the BB down the barrel.

AEG's are the single most widely used pieces of equipment in the airsoft world due to the accuracy with which they imitate their real counterparts, their cheap operation by battery and the relative abundance of variations available on the market.

Even with AEG's produced from metals such as aluminium and steel the devices are incapable of being converted to fire live rounds. They lack the correct internal structure, mounting points for the necessary components and the quality of materials required to survive the gas expansion from a live round without being destroyed in the process.

GBB's or Gas Blow Back

Gas blow back devices in airsoft are a relative of the air-pistol for competition shooting but are by no means as powerful or capable of being converted to do the same thing. In general GBB's tend to be most popular in the area of pistols and sidearms which would be carried by most participants in an airsoft game though recent developments by manufacturers in China have led to the introduction of a few proof-of-concept pieces being produced in the "blow back airsoft rifle" area.

A gas blow back airsoft pistol uses compressed gas stored inside a magazine to propel a BB instead of the air which is normally compressed by a piston in an AEG. The mechanism for propelling the BB is reasonably simple however a certain amount of the gas is also used to propel the slide of the pistol (or equivalent components in a GBB rifle) backwards (hence the Blow Back name), when this slide is pushed back, it is brought forward again by a spring, while also loading another BB from the magazine into the pistol. The cycle then repeats when the trigger is pulled again.

As with the AEG's – GBB's lack the physical strength to survive the gas expansion from a live round. In fact, most GBB's are incapable of handling the pressures exerted by gasses at higher pressure than Propane (a very low pressure gas).

NBB or Non Blow Back

Where the gas blow back variety imitates the action of the real world variant the NBB forgoes this aesthetic and instead operates on the same principal but from a fixed slide. The result is a much quieter design which is popular with a select few players whose play stratagem requires more subtlety. These are however rare on the market with only a handful of models available.

The Non Blow Back pistol is in essence, a much simpler relative of the GBB pistol, in this case, the expansion of gas stored in the magazine propels the BB, however there is no slide movement required to load the next BB. As with GBB's, NBB's lack the physical ability to withstand the pressures exerted by a live round, they also have very few moving internal parts and no loading mechanism.

Springers or Spring Operated Guns

Spring powered pistols requiring the mechanism to be cocked for each round was the introduction many people had to airsoft. Often low powered and of extremely poor quality these devices are now almost universally shunned by the airsoft community. These generally come with a small bag of the 0.12g yellow type BB's and have recently begun to appear in close-out shops and head-shops across the nation.

There are, however, another kind of spring-powered airsoft device which is not viewed in the same way as the single fire spring pistols is the spring-operated rifle. Usually confined to the area of replica hunting and sniper rifles operating with a "bolt-action" these devices make up a large portion of the precision shooting end of the airsoft spectrum. Carried by players who require a device that does not produce the noise of an AEG motor but maintains the barrel length and accuracy (if not exceeding them).

Spring operated rifles are the most basic of designs seen in the airsoft world. The spring operated rifles propel a BB by means of a spring compressed in front of a piston, similar to an AEG, however in this case, the means to pull the piston back is provided by the operator pulling back the bolt handle of the rifle. Similarly to the AEG mentioned above, when the trigger is pulled, the piston, which is compressed against the spring, is released and allowed to travel forward, forcing compressed air out of the cylinder chamber in front of it which then in turn propels the BB down the barrel.

As with all other airsoft devices, the necessary physical strength to withstand the forces exerted by live rounds is not found in spring operated rifles. The internal components also differ greatly from real rifles and they do not have any of the components necessary to chamber or ignite a bullet.

BB Showers or 40mm Grenades

Airsoft is a tag-gaming sport. As such there are many attempts to replicate the effects of real world devices on the airsoft field. Not all of these are successful and alternative uses for the physical shapes of real world devices are found. Hence the airsoft 40mm BB shower.

Essentially these cartridges, inserted into a mock up of a grenade launcher or other device, act in a similar way to a large shot gun round by sending a cloud of gas propelled BB's in a single direction mimicking (albeit in a circuitous way) the effect of a fragmentation grenade. It is important to note that only the BB's leave the end of the launch device and not the BB shower grenade itself.

These devices more than any other have caused confusion for people through a combination of poor explanation and inconsiderate marketing by the manufacturers and have led some to the misconception that

they are in some way an explosive. This is not the case as is explained below.

Other variations are available for this kind of device including foam rubber objects similar to “nerf darts”, powder discharge (simulating a “smoke screen” using talcum) or paintball launchers.

A airsoft 40mm grenade consists of several small tubes into which BBs are loaded and also a small gas chamber which stores a limited amount of standard airsoft gas. When the BB shower is triggered (by pushing a small button at the back) the gas which is stored inside it is released, the only path available for the gas to escape is through the tubes in which the BBs are stored, as the gas expands, it then forces the BBs out of the device. Owing to the number of BBs stored in the device and the limited quantity of gas which can be stored, the power at which the BBs are propelled is significantly less than which they are propelled out of other airsoft devices.

The operation of a real 40mm grenade requires a striker pin similar to a real bullet, this requires a spring loaded striker pin to strike the back of the grenade to ignite it, the airsoft equivalent uses a simple push button mechanism which requires very little force to push. Furthermore, as with all other airsoft devices, the launcher would not withstand the forces required to launch a 40mm grenade out of the launcher, even if it was possible to ignite one inside the launch tube it would pose much greater danger to the operator than to anyone in the vicinity.

AI Tornado Grenades, Balloon Operated Distraction Devices and Zoxna Mines

Also available in the airsoft world are gas-powered trip mines and grenades. These devices are intended to mimic the fragmentation devices used by the real military and police forces in countries where the use of pyrotechnic or firework based versions are not permitted.

These devices have only recently come to the market after years of failed designs by different companies. Harmless, low velocity, reusable and extremely tough these have proven popular in a few places already and there is a slow increase in their use at Irish venues.

In keeping with the drive to create safe imitations there are other devices which are intended, through non-pyrotechnic means, to imitate sonic distraction devices. These operate either by use of 12g CO2 cartridges or by means of a balloon filled with the same low density propellant as gas-blow back airsoft devices.

As with the Tornado and the Zoxna, these distraction devices (often referred to as “flashbangs”) are relatively new to the market and are quite popular with players who take part in close quarters games.

Both tornado and zoxna airsoft devices operate on a similar principle to the 40mm BB shower detailed above, having several small tubes into which Bbs are loaded and then expelled by a force of gas escaping. In the case of the tornado grenade, the BB tubes are aligned in such a way as to rotate the device as the gas escapes, thus scattering the BBs in a wider pattern.

The Escort flashbang device is, in essence a balloon inflater. The device uses small balloons which are loaded into the device and again, a small gas chamber. When the gas is released, it flows into the balloon, inflating it. When the balloon reaches it's maximum inflation, the balloon 'POP's, making a noise similar to popping a party balloon with a pin.

The “Thumper” devices operate on a similar principle, however instead of using inflatable balloons, they have a proprietary design rubber cap into which the gas is expelled, again, when the gas pressure is sufficient, the rubber cap 'POP's making a noise.

Airsoft Landmines

Gas powered landmines for airsoft are available for purchase from a number of companies and a few have been imported into Ireland however, their use is limited in games as they require a player to tread on them directly and their prices are prohibitive for large numbers of them to be bought by an individual.

Landmines again are very similar in operation to the above mentioned BB showers and Tornado/Zoxna "Grenades", they have a series of small tubes which BBs are expelled from when triggered. In this case, the design is such that the device can be left on the ground and when stepped on, the trigger mechanism is activated. Many players also choose to put a small quantity of Talcum Powder into these, produces a "cloud of smoke" effect when the gas expels the powder from the device.

Airsoft Claymore Mines

Spring powered claymore mines are used in airsoft games, particularly by more experienced players engaging in games with much stricter rules as a method of area denial or as way to eliminate the opposition. These are a more popular alternative to the landmines discussed previously due to their comparative price, function and spring operation rather than reliance on gas and unlikelihood of scoring with one.

An airsoft claymore mine utilises a spring loaded mechanism to propel BBs. The device consists of two spring loaded arms, with a piece of cloth between them. When loaded, a number of BBs sit on top of the cloth and the arms are held in place by the front of the device, in turn held closed by a catch. When this catch is released, the force of the springs pulls the cloth taut rapidly, causing the BBs which reside on top of it to be expelled outwards away from the device. The level of power exerted by each BB is minimum, with very little impact being felt even at close range.

The radio system used to trigger the claymore device remotely operates on a similar principle to the remote control used to unlock a car, they have very limited range and are susceptible to many different kinds of interference.

Airsoft gaming

Airsoft as a sport can be divided into a number of sub categories as follows:

- Casual Skirmishing
- MilSim
- Target Shooting or "Plinking"

These three sub categories are explained and further divided as follows:

Casual Skirmishing

Possibly the most common form that airsoft takes is casual skirmishing. Played at venues across the globe this game borrows a lot from its predecessor, Paintball. Tried and tested game formats are used such as King of the Hill (where participants attempt to seize a particular place and hold it until the time runs out), Capture the Flag (where participants attempt to capture an object and hold it until the time expires), Elimination (where participants attempt to win by eliminating as many of the opposing team as possible) and many others. The demand for performance equipment, accurate camouflaging, useful communications systems and the other trappings of the real world is at its lowest in this kind of game (that's not to say that there are not those who do put a lot of effort in).

Casual skirmishing represents the vast majority of time spent in the airsoft community with games held on

regular days at venues accepting open attendance.

Military Simulation (MilSim), Re-enactment and War gaming.

MilSim is at the opposite end of the spectrum to casual skirmishing. During a “MilSim event” participants operate according to extremely strict rules regarding the kinds of uniforms, communications, airsoft devices and even the number of BB's they can carry in order to provide the authentic “weekend warrior experience”. These games often run according to a script known to the organisers and it is as much role-playing and theater as it is a sport.

In MilSim the key is authenticity. Many participants invest large sums of money in reproducing a specific look or imitation of the real thing and it is vital to the willing suspension of disbelief that every last detail of the equipment be correct.

Target Shooting & Plinking

Target shooting and plinking are another part of the airsoft world. Recently there has been talk of an “airsoft target shooting league” for players to compete against one another in measurable and direct competition. These plans are in their infancy however it is likely that they will come to fruition by this time next year.

Realism of the devices

Airsoft devices are highly realistic and imitate their real world counterparts accurately. It has often been said that a lay person cannot tell the difference between a genuine firearm and its airsoft replica.

This for the most part is true. Airsoft devices are purpose built and designed to provide the exact dimensions of the real thing for three reasons;

1) Ergonomics

Real world firearms are designed to be easy to use under extreme physical conditions and billions have been invested in finding the best way to do this. The results of this investment have been a number of familiar and not-so familiar designs seen in modern firearms. During an airsoft game the participants will be exerting themselves quite heavily and while they require the best operation possible for their equipment they also require the most comfortable application of design.

As such, it only makes sense that airsoft devices imitate their real world counterparts where ergonomics is a factor.

2) Physics

The physics of how the airsoft device operates, not to mention the mechanics and engineering, means that the outer shell of many real-world firearm designs is perfectly suited to housing the gearbox and motors required.

3) Willing suspension of disbelief (psychology)

It is common sense that as we get older, for most of us, our ability to harness the full force of our imagination wanes and we become less able to suspend our disbelief. In airsoft, when a participant is engaging in a MilSim they often need as much encouragement to throw themselves into the role as possible. In a similar sense to an actor who may attempt to live the life of a particular character for some time the airsofter attempts to do the same only in a greatly condensed time frame.

Safety & Urban Myths

The perception that many people have of Airsoft is coloured by the equipment and apparel used by the players. This has led to a number of misconceptions, myths and some concern about the sport, not the least of which is the safety issues.

Safety is the primary concern of any responsible venue operator and players of Airsoft. It is also an inherent feature of the device design and equipment used during skirmishes.

All players wear protective goggles or ballistic glasses designed to withstand impacts higher than those of the plastic Airsoft rounds. Use of eye protection is mandatory on all sites in Ireland and the UK and is the generally accepted practice amongst all Airsoft players.

In addition to eyewear, many players choose to wear plastic or cushioned neoprene masks to protect their face and teeth. Military grade and replica helmets are common, as are kneepads and the vast majority of players wear gloves to protect their fingers and hands. While there is no danger of serious injury, most players prefer to avoid the sharp stings of Airsoft rounds impacting exposed, bony areas.

Venues always have what is called a "safe zone". In this area every Airsoft device must be switched to "safe" and the magazine removed before entry. This ensures that no accidents can take place in the presence of people who may not be wearing their eye protection.

Further to this, many venues adopt a "fire zone only" policy, which means that the Airsoft devices outside of the actual play area must be inactive (safety on and magazine out) regardless of whether a player is in a designated "safe zone" or not.

Finally, all Airsoft games and venues, like Paintball and Laser tag, have marshals operating within the play area. The purpose of this is to make sure that the rules of the game are followed (eliminated players leaving the play area, etc) and that the safety rules are adhered to. Marshals also provide an additional layer of safety in that, should the worst happen and a player is injured, the game can be stopped immediately and the injured party can be safely and quickly removed from the play area and given whatever appropriate first aid or medical attention is required.

Regardless of this, there are still a number of misconceptions that surround the Airsoft devices and the sport in general. We will attempt to dispel a number of this but please keep in mind that it is not feasible to cover every potential misconception and we make no claim to do so.

Examples of common misconceptions

Airsoft devices are dangerous, can cause injury or even kill!

Airsoft devices are specifically designed to be harmless beyond a sharp sting. According to the law, the legal and scientific threshold for any projectile round to cause a wound is greater than 1.35 joules of muzzle energy². All Airsoft devices used in skirmishes produce muzzle energy at or below 1 joule, that is, more than 20% less than the defined energy required for any round to cause any significant injury.

Many people claim that an impact with the human eye, even at such low velocities, could result in the loss of the eye or other significant permanent damage. This is also erroneous since the 1joule limit takes into account the resilience of the human eye.

It is currently recognised by the British Home Office and forensic science service that projectiles with muzzle

2 The kinetic energy possessed by a projectile as it leaves the barrel of the device.

energy of less than 1.35j are “incapable of penetrating even vulnerable parts of the body, such as the eye, although a direct hit from very close range would cause bruising”³

Furthermore, it has also been noted that “assessments by forensic scientists had indicated that the minimum muzzle energy required to inflict a penetrating wound lay between 2.2 and 3.0 ft/lb (foot pounds), or 3-4 joules.”⁴

Airsoft devices are illegal in Ireland.

The current law in Ireland exempts any device launching a projectile with muzzle energy not exceeding 1 joule from classification as a firearm⁵. Therefore, Airsoft devices are indeed legal and in fact fall under the definition of “projectile toys” under the definitions set by European standards.

The IAA acknowledges that people may take exception with their legality on the grounds of their arguing that there should be some legislation applied to their purchase, import and operation. The IAA fully supports fair and balanced legislation to prevent the misuse of Airsoft equipment provided it does not impact negatively on the Airsofting community.

Airsoft devices are the same thing as BB guns and Air Guns.

No, they are not. The IAA does however understand that there is some confusion in this regard.

To clarify:

Air Guns are weapons which propel a lead projectile at high velocity and are typically used for target shooting and hunting very small game (rodents etc). *Air guns* use compressed gas and generate muzzle energy in the region of 17joules. Such muzzle energy is far in excess of the physical capabilities of any Airsoft device.

A *BB gun* (wherein the “BB” is actually a gauge rather than a contraction of “ball bearing”) is a weapon that propels a metal projectile at high velocities by means of an explosive charge or compressed gas. *BB guns* are capable of achieving muzzle velocities in excess of 1000 feet per second and are often used for hunting rabbits and other small animals as well as for target shooting. These uses and stats are also far outside the potential of an Airsoft device and distinction should be drawn. An Airsoft device is a precision sporting device designed to safely propel a plastic bead or ball at speeds in the region of 100meters per second. Airsoft rounds and devices are incapable of producing the energy required to cause harm and as such are suitable for player-to-player “tagging”.

Airsoft devices could be loaded with metal shot making them lethal weapons.

Airsoft devices are precision devices that are designed to operate within specific parameters.

First, the weight of a metal round is far higher than that of an Airsoft round⁶, which means that an Airsoft device is unable to generate sufficient energy to propel the metal round with any significant velocity.

Second, the internal gearboxes of Airsoft devices, the part of the device which loads the ammunition from the magazine into the barrel, are constructed to deal with a very light, and very specifically dimensioned⁷ projectile. Any attempt to force the gearbox to cope with vastly heavier objects (>1.5g), or objects not meeting the tolerances mentioned in footnote 6, will severely damage the device.

3 British House of Commons, Home Affairs Second Report, 6 April 2000, Appendix 1, section b.

4 Control of Firearms in Northern Ireland and the Draft Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, paragraph 32.

5 Criminal Justice Act 2006, Part 5 “Amendments of Firearms Acts”, section 26 “Amendments of section 1 of the Principle Act”

6 Airsoft pellets are available in weights from 0.12g up to a maximum of 0.42g

7 Airsoft pellets are machined to exactly 5.95mm with a maximum tolerance of 0.01mm either way

Finally, the barrel of an Airsoft device is specifically machined to very exact tolerances⁸, any attempt to pass anything but an Airsoft specific pellet through them will result in one of two things happening. Either the projectile will be too small to form an air seal and will simply roll out of the barrel, or it will be too large, and jam in it.

Airsoft will lead people to want to buy real firearms.

There is no such thing as a “gate way sport”. If an Airsoft player wishes to take the time to learn to operate, store and maintain a firearm that is legally purchased, licensed and registered then there is no issue.

Airsoft, as a sport, has nothing to do with actual firearms and the IAA make it clear that any member who operates an actual firearm does so outside of the remit of the IAA and Airsoft.

Airsoft devices are regularly used in crimes.

It is the intent of the perpetrator of a crime that is the problem and not the object used. No statistical study exists with regard to this question and it is a matter of conjecture as to whether their use would be regular to the point of excluding other objects such as knives, hammers and syringes.

Airsoft and Paintball glorify violence, war and crime.

This is a common point of view. It is also exactly the same one that many people have towards video games, rock/heavymetal/rap music, modern cinema, television shows and the news. There has never been a conclusive, scientific study showing a causal link between video games, music etc and violent crime much less one showing a causal link between involvement in specific sports and violent crime.

8 Airsoft barrels are manufactured in steps of 0.01mm from 6.08mm down to 6.01mm

The airsoft question: Proposals on a solution.

Ultimately, the airsoft question is one of how it can co-exist with mainstream Irish society. In providing answers to this question it is necessary to understand both sides of the issue, that of the airsoft community which includes those whose livelihoods depend on it and that of the general public who are confused and feel endangered by its existence. Both sides must be treated equally and with empathy for their respective concerns. As such, the following aspects of the question are examined independently below.

Proliferation of airsoft devices

Since August 2006 airsoft devices have been available legally in the Republic of Ireland either via the internet or (more recently) from retailers located within the country. From examining the airsoft community closely it is possible to understand what has happened during this period and the combination of factors which have led to it.

- 1) Airsoft devices are being imported by small operators for sale, indiscriminately to consumers via market stalls, head-shops, €2-shops, Polski Skleps, gadget shops and any number of other non-dedicated premises and operations.
- 2) Under current Irish legislation (CJA2006) airsoft equipment is not considered a firearm, however it also lacks any specific legal recognition and though essentially a toy or sporting equipment it is not covered by any of these laws either (where no test case in law has been taken).
- 3) There are no restrictions on who is able to retail these devices and no effort has been entered into by the authorities to investigate a viable method for doing so.
- 4) Airsoft is a relatively new product to the Irish market and it has the quality of being a “impulse product” against it. Consumers are purchasing them for novelty value or out of curiosity which is something that will fade given time.

It is the considered opinion of the IAA as well as the general consensus in the community that the government enter into talks with the dedicated retailers of airsoft equipment to reach an agreement over permits to trade in airsoft equipment. This would result in the elimination of the fly-by-night traders without destroying their businesses (since they trade in a multitude of objects and paraphernalia not just airsoft) while protecting the dedicated and legitimate retailers who are already acting with the best interests of the community at large at heart.

Further to this that legislation be considered to restrict the purchasing age of airsoft equipment to those persons over 16years. The use of such equipment should only be at designated venues or the privacy of the home so restriction of “use” would be unnecessary.

Airsoft devices in public

The use of airsoft devices in public is a topic that has been covered time and again. Both the IAA and the Gardai have stated that any individual producing such a device in a public place or having one on display in such a manner as to cause alarm should result in the prosecution of that individual as if it were the genuine article. The airsoft community is united on this issue more than any other and have extended their argument to include

- 1) Skirmishing on public land (such as Coilte etc).
- 2) Skirmishing on private land without permission.
- 3) Skirmishing on private land that is in view of the public.
- 4) Skirmishing on private or public land where wildlife etc may be endangered.

There have been incidents where individuals have acted irresponsibly and skirmished in areas that appear on this list however, these were not members of the IAA and therefore fall outside of the associations power to discipline them for their actions. The IAA and its members condemn anyone who acts in this manner and actively supports their prosecution.

Airsoft devices involved in crime

It has come to the attention of the association that there have been crimes perpetrated using airsoft equipment. We would ask that the issue be approached rationally. The fact that an airsoft device was used in the commission of a crime does not imply that the device was the cause of that crime. Assuming this logic, the average member of the airsoft community would be a criminal with a substantial arrest record.

Airsoft devices, because of their nature can be exploited by criminal elements for the purposes of intimidation however that statement must be applied to a variety of other, equally legal devices. Furthermore, there has never been a statistical study conducted of crime statistics, nor figures presented examining the frequency with which airsoft devices (or indeed any replicas) are used in the place of real firearms – drawing conclusions on this line is impossible without evidence to support it.

When considering the relationship between airsoft and crime the following assumptions must be made;

- 1) Persons intending to commit a crime will do so regardless of the tools at their disposal.
- 2) That it is the intention and the act of the crime that should be assigned the blame and not any object employed in its commission.
- 3) Airsoft devices look like firearms and are likely to be perceived as such by anyone threatened with one.
- 4) There is a potential for someone wielding an airsoft device to be harmed by armed Gardai responding to a perceived threat.

Airsoft devices are designed and intended to look like their real life counterparts. This is not so they will be of use to criminals but rather so they are of use to legitimate skirmishers and collectors. The airsoft community does expect that these devices can be mistaken for a real firearm and as such have taken steps to ensure that legitimate airsofters do not cause problems for the community.

It is also understood by the airsoft community that this is not enough and that stricter measures are required to control the proliferation of equipment amongst the criminal element. It is the general consensus that regulations be brought in to vet who is permitted to retail airsoft equipment and that only dedicated retailers of airsoft goods, paintball goods or other sporting goods be permitted to do so. From a perspective of limitation this makes sense. Any retailers actively selling to those with a clear intention of using the devices in an irresponsible way would be in danger of losing their permit to trade.

The community also believes that any persons engaging in irresponsible behavior such as brandishing an

airsoft device in public or engaging in threatening behavior while using an airsoft device should result in the prosecution of that individual as though the device were the genuine article and that where the legislation regarding this aspect is weak, it be tightened by introduction of legislation to outlaw the brandishing of such devices in an irresponsible manner.

The sport of Airsoft employs a multitude of devices with far ranging physical and technical characteristics, defining an "Airsoft device" would be extremely difficult and could have a disadvantageous effect on the goal of bringing the use and availability of imitation firearms into a socially acceptable situation.

Airsoft devices and minors

It is understood by the IAA and the community that there have been incidents where young children have come into possession of airsoft equipment. Both the association and the general community find this deeply disturbing. The IAA has taken steps to ensure that its affiliate retailers use the following format for vetting sales.

- 1) ID requirements. Persons purchasing airsoft devices must produce valid ID in the form of officially recognised passport, National Age Card, drivers license, immigration ID etc.
- 2) Persons aged under 16years cannot purchase or have purchased for them airsoft devices.
- 3) Persons aged between 16 and 18 years, regardless of IAA membership, must have a parent or guardian present at the point of sale.
- 4) Persons aged 18years or more are considered adults in the eyes of the law and therefore no restrictions other than ID requirements are place upon them (it is a retailers prerogative whether they wish to ask for IAA membership numbers for vetting purposes).

Recap

The IAA suggests the following should take place at a legislative level.

- 1) That the Department of Justice and Gardai enter into talks with the dedicated and legitimate retailers of airsoft goods with a view to establishing a system of permit to trade in airsoft devices and/or replica's as a whole.
- 2) That a minimum age be set for the purchase of airsoft devices restricting their sale to persons over the age of 18 years or over 16 years with the consent of a parent or legal guardian.
- 3) The IAA recommends that the CJA be amended to include a specific offence of "carrying or brandishing an imitation firearm, in a public place, in a manner that could reasonably cause distress or harm to others".

Statement in Closing

Airsoft is a sport which has served to establish a new retail industry in Ireland, it has spawned many gaming venues which have served as a mixing ground for people of all ages, from all cultures and of every level of physical ability from wheelchair bound to fighting fit.

Airsoft is responsible for bringing about a massive lifestyle change for many people of all ages. People who had previously spent their time indoors playing video games and watching television are now actively engaged in airsoft as an outdoor pursuit. Airsoft provides these people with much needed exercise, a huge benefit in itself given the rising levels of obesity in Irish society.

Furthermore, venues serve as a hugely social place where people all come together in the name of a common interest, and the ensuing community spirit among the players has been incredible. The Filipino populous in Dublin have taken to airsoft in huge numbers, numerous other regular players hail from France, Poland, the Czech republic, China and South Africa to mention but a few. There is a massive cross border community with the airsofters in Northern Ireland. In short, airsoft is a fantastic gateway for social integration in Irish society.

The airsofting community is comprised of a group of responsible, passionate and fun loving people. The sport has brought a boost in jobs, trade and outdoor activity to the country. Airsoft devices are entirely safe by design, yet by virtue of their appearance, everything that the sport has accomplished stands to be dismissed if legislation is introduced which is not balanced and appropriate to the issues posed. Such legislation, improperly implemented will cost jobs, eliminate a large cross-border initiative (which is currently costing the state nothing), deprive foreign nationals of a gateway out of isolation from mainstream society, and forcibly drive a safe pursuit underground where there will be no controls and no oversight.

There is no valid scientific evidence to justify for the demonisation of this sport and its players. The IAA calls upon the authorities, the Department of Justice, the Minister of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, and indeed the entire government to recognise this fact and to enact appropriate legislation which will serve the concerns of both the airsoft community and Irish society as a whole.

Appendix:

Standards for retailers.

Internet transactions.

There have been many valid questions raised about what can be done to control the sales of airsoft devices over the internet. The IAA has no intention of restricting the practices of affiliated retailers however in the interests of public relations and maintaining the integrity of the age requirements affiliates are required to only ship airsoft replica purchases to the billing address and card holder appearing in the credit card information.

Muzzle energy

- 1) Irish law states that any device whose muzzle energy exceeds 1joule qualifies as a firearm. It is understood that standard industry chronograph devices can exhibit variance in their readings from unit to unit and from location to location depending on environmental conditions. As such the IAA strongly recommends that all devices sold by affiliates have a muzzle velocity limited to 310fps with a tolerance of 15fps (measurements with a 0.2g BB). This is to ensure that affiliates do not get accused of supply equipment in excess of the legal limit due to variance in chronograph readings from location to location.
- 2) Muzzle energy readings must be taken according to the steps shown in the IAA Chronograph Guidelines.
- 3) It is understood that devices can be imported to Ireland which can be in excess of the limits placed by the CJA2006. Affiliates are required to seek written (or electronic) confirmation from suppliers that merchandise shipped to Ireland will be legal.

Security

Affiliates are required to have appropriate security in place to prevent theft of merchandise from their warehousing arrangements. No specific instructions will be given due to the disparate nature of premises however a measure of common sense is expected from retailers in this area.

Sales checks

- 1) Affiliates are required to request a form of photo ID for the purposes of assessing the age of a customer. In cases where a sale is to take place to an individual between the age of 16 and 18 a parent or legal guardian must be present and must present their own ID.
- 2) Affiliates are required not to make available airsoft devices to those persons who make mention of intent to use them for unacceptable purposes to include (but not limited to) pest control, use on animals, self defense or criminal activity.

Revised Retailers Regulations (effective January 2009)

Once agreed these regulations will become enforceable across the board. No exceptions can or will be made due to the necessity of maintaining the integrity of the system.

1. Retailers must operate to all applicable trading standards within the current Irish Legislation.
2. Retailers must not engage in business practice which brings the sport of airsoft into disrepute.
3. Retailers must not knowingly supply, make available any airsoft device which contravenes the current Criminal Justice Act 2006 definition of a firearm (*the 1 joule limit*).
4. Retailers must not provide service, mechanical alteration or enhancement to an airsoft device which causes said individual device to exceed the limitations imposed by the Criminal Justice Act 2006.
5. Retailers must not supply any device incorporating a pyrotechnic charge as directed by the current legal limitations.
6. Retailers must follow the procedure for chronograph testing of devices where those devices are checked.
7. Retailers must not sell or make available any airsoft device to persons below 16 years of age.
8. Retailers must seek permission of a parent or guardian before making available airsoft devices to persons between 16-18 years.
9. Retailers must confirm a person is aged 18 or above before retailing to them as an individual. Identification must be a legitimate photographic ID to wit: Passport, Drivers License, National Age Card, Immigration Card or other government issued ID incorporating a photograph of the individual and their date of birth. (*possibly the use of the IAA Membership card supported by a relevant entry in the IAA database*)
10. Retailers must not make available devices to any person they deem to be likely to use an airsoft device for dangerous or illegal purposes which is to include (*but is not limited to*) intent to use against animals, children or for use in public or as a means of self protection or criminal purpose.
11. Retailers are obliged to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent theft of equipment from storage or retail premises which must include proper lock-up procedures.
12. Retailers are obliged to permit random spot inspections of their premises by both the IAA staff and relevant authorities (*likely An Garda Siochana*).
13. Retailers must co-operate in every reasonable respect with the relevant authorities (*customs & excise, trading standards, Gardai, Department of Justice etc*).
14. **Retailers must acknowledge that deliberately breaking these guidelines may result in the revocation of affiliation with the IAA.**

Analysis of the Revised regulations.

The reason for revising the regulations applicable to the retailer affiliates is two fold. Firstly it was felt necessary to shift from advising “guidelines” to having something concrete to which the retailers could be held accountable. Second, the original guidelines were insufficient in their usefulness since they made demands on areas that were not part of the IAA remit while being out of touch with the reality of our present situation and potential future issues.

Old guidelines

Currently in force

1. It is the responsibility of the retailer to ensure that they do not supply Airsoft goods to those under the age of 18 without the signature and a copy of a photo ID of that person’s parent or guardian.
2. It is the responsibility of the retailer to ensure that they do not sell Airsoft equipment that could be perceived as threatening by a reasonable member of the public to any person or persons whom they suspect may use such equipment for illegal or threatening purposes.
3. It is the responsibility of the retailer to collect a copy of a legitimate photographic ID from any person or persons purchasing an Airsoft device (to include but not limited to Airsoft Electric Guns, Gas Blow Back Pistols, Airsoft Gas-Grenades, Airsoft Gas Charge Landmines, Spring Pistols, Spring Rifles or any other item which may, in a reasonable sense, be deemed to cause likely offence or disturbance to the general public).
4. Photographic ID for the purposes of this document is considered to be any of the following (or their international equivalents) Passport, Drivers License, Military Identification, Social Identity Card with Photo, Police Services ID card with photo or National Age Card with photo.
5. Retailers must keep photocopy or facsimile of the document in question for a period of 5 years (along with a copy of the transaction receipt indicating the items purchased) in either paper format or as a secure, digital file with an appropriate off site back up system and must be prepared to provide this information to the relevant authorities where reasonably requested. (Retailers may, if they so choose, operate an account system whereby a single copy of a customer’s ID is kept on file with all accompanying transaction receipts and only request that said customer provide a signature on the invoice upon purchase of equipment.)
6. Retailers must ensure that reasonable steps to secure their stock are taken both at their designated place of business and at any storage facility they may have off site. Retailers must also ensure that an up to date (monthly) inventory is kept of their stock and that any discrepancies are accounted for by the sales ledger.
7. In cases where stock is missing without an adequate explanation it must be reported to the local authorities immediately listing make, model, description, value, specifications and where available batch or serial numbers. Retailers are obliged to aid the authorities in the recovery of any stolen goods to a reasonable degree.
8. Retailers are obliged to conduct their business in such a way as to adhere to the trading standards laws in the Republic of Ireland and to recognise and respect the statutory rights of their customers.
9. **Retailers are obliged to conduct their business in such a way as to promote Airsoft as a safe and legal sport without bringing this ideal into disrepute.**

Explanation of changes

Points 1 and 4 of the old guidelines are replaced by points 8 and 9 of the new regulations.

Point 2 in the old guidelines is replaced by point 10 in the new regulations.

The demand for the retention of photocopied ID (point 5) is being eliminated in favor of requesting the government to provide legislation to define airsoft and restrict sales to persons over 16years.

Points 6 and 7 in the old guidelines are replaced by points 11, 12 and 13 in the new regulations.

Point 8 in the old guidelines is replaced by point 1 in the new regulations.

Point 9 in the old guidelines is replaced by point 2 in the new regulations.

Explanations of the New Regulations.

Point 1 is intended to future proof and tidy up the text of the guideline it replaced. There is no misinterpretation of this regulation, it refers to **every law**.

Point 2 is deliberately vague as to cover all possibilities. There are many things that a retailer could do to bring airsoft into disrepute ranging from attempting to create an unfair monopoly, to extorting customers to upgrading equipment beyond the CJA limitation. Every dishonest practice and every dodgy deal worked is a threat to the ideals of airsoft and can not be permitted to happen within the administration of the IAA.

Point 3 is written as a future proofed clause. In essence it should only ever require updating as and when the legislation changes the definition of a firearm or the definition of an airsoft devices.

Point 4 is intended to ensure that no affiliated retailer will carry out an alteration on an airsoft device to make it an illegal firearm. This is here not to suggest that this practice goes on within the IAA affiliate body but to point out that it will not be tolerated and that no affiliate will provide such a service.

Point 5 is a temporary regulation which is in place as long as the restrictions on pyrotechnics are in force. Should the status quo on these devices change then this rule can and should be amended. While it is understood by the IAA that the sale of such items in the republic would technically contravene point 1 it is specifically included to make it clear that the retailer of such items will not be tolerated under the IAA administration.

Point 6 is a directive to ensure that all consumers can be certain that any item that has been checked was checked according to the rigorous standards required by the IAA.

Point 7-9 are included as part of the self-restricting system which, it is hoped, will be adopted by the Irish legislature.

Point 10 is a request to use discretion and common sense to prevent the sale of equipment to individuals who would damage airsoft by irresponsible behavior. It is expected that this would be an automatic response since such characters would harm the retailers ability to make money however it is important that there be a stated position on this issue.

Point 11 is the requirement to ensure that adequate security is included for any premises storing airsoft devices. The potential for being targeted by criminals as part of a larger operation is well understood and

the IAA believes it is necessary to make it part of standard operating procedure for all affiliates. Airsoft can have an impact on a community and in order to be a part of both it is right that we should do our reasonable share to prevent harm coming to either community.

Point 12 is the requirement for retailers to permit random inspections of their premises. These inspections will be carried out by Gardai and by IAA staff and may involve (but are not limited to) the examination of downgrade procedure, interviewing staff to ensure their knowledge of the law applicable to airsoft, examining the chronograph equipment for evidence of tempering and the employment of “mystery shoppers” as a blind test. This not to be taken by affiliates that they are automatically suspected of wrong doing, rather it is intended to be a measure for ensuring that IAA can claim that affiliates are following the rules and we can be trusted to govern ourselves.

Point 13 is included to ensure that all retailers will comply with the authorities where appropriate – the authorities should be able to operate in the knowledge that they have full support in the execution of their duties when dealing with any IAA affiliate.

Point 14 is the final and most important point. Any affiliate who is shown to be in breach of this regulations is in danger of losing their affiliation and where appropriate a report to the relevant authorities will be made. The IAA will not tolerate any member or affiliate damaging the integrity of the association.

Revised Venue Regulations (effective January 2009)

1. All venues will adhere to the statute laws in the Republic of Ireland governing their operation.
2. No venue will engage in practices which bring the airsoft community into disrepute.
3. Venues will ensure that each separate zone is clearly marked and that all appropriate signs are in visible and conspicuous locations including the Irish Airsoft Association certificate of affiliation. Zones should be enforced according to the IAA Standard and the current accepted rules of engagement.
4. Venue operators must ensure that all airsoft devices governed by the current rules adhere to the limitation set in the CJA2006 legislation i.e. No device may be permitted to enter the game zone whose muzzle energy exceeds 1 joule. Chronographing must be done in accordance with the IAA.
5. Venue operators are obliged to ensure that all equipment made available to participants including face masks, AEG's, sidearms, goggles etc are safe to be use.
6. Venues must ensure that they have at least 1 member of staff with recognised first aid qualifications on site on any operating day.
7. Venue operators must ensure that any participant under the age of 18 has the permission of their parent or guardian to take part in airsoft activities.
8. Venues must make themselves available for an annual IAA inspection wherein the venue will be examined for health and safety issues as well as the standard of adherence to these regulations.
9. Venue operators are obliged to ensure that all airsoft devices stored on site are secure and adequate measures are taken to prevent theft.
10. Venues must refuse entry to participants in possession of restricted or illegal items including, but not limited to Irish Military Uniform or pyrotechnic devices.
11. Venues must observe the requirements for safety briefings on site before any participant may be permitted to engage in any activity.
12. Venues must ensure that a qualified marshal be present at all times where players are present in the game zone.
13. Venues are required to hold third party insurance and to make the details of such available for inspection by the relevant authorities.
14. Venues are obliged to permit random spot inspections of their premises by both the IAA staff and relevant authorities.
15. Venue operators must co-operate in every reasonable respect with the relevant authorities (*customs & excise, trading standards, Gardai, Department of Justice etc*).

Analysis of the revised venues regulations.

The reason for revising the regulations applicable to the venue affiliates is two fold. Firstly it was felt necessary to shift from advising "guidelines" to having something concrete to which the venues could be held accountable. Second, the original guidelines were insufficient in their usefulness since they made demands

on areas that were not part of the IAA remit while being out of touch with the reality of our present situation and potential future issues.

Old Guidelines

Currently in force

1. All venue rules regarding health, safety, play boundaries, safe zones and conduct should be clearly posted in the safe zone, changing rooms and at the sign in desk.
2. Either the site operator or a site-recognised marshal must give a safety briefing and the beginning of each play session (morning, half time and evening) covering the major safety issues (eyewear, blind fire, physical contact, pyrotechnics etc). No players arriving to a venue after the initial briefing should be admitted to the play area without being briefed by a qualified member of staff.
3. Each venue must have a working and accurate chronograph to ensure that all Airsoft devices incorporating a barrel can be tested for feet/meters per-second and muzzle energy. Sites are obliged to observe the limits imposed by the Criminal Justice Act (2006) definition of a firearm (the "1 Joule" Rule). Where a device fails to comply with the law or the published venue rules said device must not be permitted to enter the play area.
4. Any device which is deemed to be an unreasonable danger to players must not be permitted to enter the play area. Any device which exceeds the energy limits, is faulty in a potentially hazardous way or is likely to cause significant harm is deemed to be in contravention of these Guidelines.
5. Venues must have a safe zone which is clearly marked to avoid confusion and accidents. The safe zone must be free of active devices at all time (the definition of "active" is taken to mean safety off and a magazine inserted or a BB in the firing position). It is the responsibility of both players *and* venue operators to ensure that devices do not enter the safe zone in this condition, and devices *must* be safed, with an empty barrel, before entry in the safe zone.
6. Venue operators may reserve the right to eject any person or persons whose behaviour they deem to be dangerous or contrary to the spirit of the rules they have set out and are obliged to make judicious use of this reservation.
7. Venues must have an adequate supply of drinkable water on site for hygiene and hydration purposes.
8. A first aid kit and qualified first aid personnel must be available on every game day. Ingress and egress points of the site must be kept clear and accessible to emergency vehicles. It is the responsibility of players with medical conditions that could lead to serious injury or sickness during a operational day to make the site operator aware of this and the procedures for dealing with any medical issue that arises because of it, it is the operators responsibility to ensure that particular attention is drawn to this issue for all new players unknown to the operator.
9. A log book must be kept of injuries which are greater than superficial sustained on site detailing the name, age and injury sustained by the individual and the action taken to deal with the injury.
10. Adequate fire control devices (buckets of sand, fire extinguishers) must be kept in an accessible location to areas which are liable to have need of them e.g. generators, electrical areas, workbenches etc.
11. Venues must provide proper receptacles for refuse e.g. dustbins, refuse sacks etc and make arrangements for the proper disposal of such refuse.
12. All venues must make the local authorities aware of their presence and of the sport of Airsoft securing whatever letters of permission or acknowledgment required by the authorities (if any).
13. Venues must respect their customers' statutory consumer rights.
14. Venues must seek third party insurance and provide information of this insurance upon request.

Venue standardisation

Venue Locations

Venue operators must make themselves and their venue known to the local Gardai in order to ensure that there are no misunderstandings or confrontations.

Venue operators must make all residents adjacent to the venue proper aware of airsoft and the games that will be played so as to avoid shock and confrontation.

Venues should be divided clearly into separate locations as follows

Entrance Zone

The entrance zone is the driveway or gate to the venue proper and represents the line between the Airsoft world and the general public.

No airsoft equipment should be on display within or around the entrance zone. It should be treated as though the entrance zone is a public area.

Safe Zone

The safe zone should be out of view or at a reasonable distance from the entrance zone.

The safe zone is the designated no-fire zone for all venues.

No live equipment is permitted in the safe zone (live is defined as an airsoft device capable of discharging a BB).

Eating areas, parking & lavatory facilities, sign-in area and changing areas etc should all be located in the safe zone.

Range & chrono zone

At the venue a separate area must be designated for chronographing of all devices for use in play. This area may also include a range or a range may be created separately to the chronographing area.

Eye protection must be worn by all persons in this area at all times and the standards for safety suitable for the game zone should be adhered to.

Fire Zone or Game Zone

The game zone is the designated play area.

The entrance to the game zone should be clearly posted with a warning that eyewear should be worn beyond this point.

The barrier between the game zone and the safe zone should be impermeable to 6mm airsoft rounds.

Inside the game zone the following should be observed at all times

- Protective eyewear must be worn at all times without exception.
- Players must not enter into physical altercation without exception. Belligerent or violent players must
- Marshal calls must be observed without exception.

A safe-zone may be erected in the fire zone where the distance from the safe zone is too great or to facilitate hydration, reloading etc. This inner zone should be completely enclosed and clearly marked as a "NO FIRE ZONE" to prevent accidents. Where possible a separate container or rack should be made available for players to leave their equipment outside of this internal safe zone. Inside the internal safe zone protective eye wear may be removed for cleaning or de-fogging purposes however it must be clearly posted on the exit that players must re-equip their eye-protection.

Minimum eye-protection

The minimum standard for eye-protection at an IAA affiliated site, venue, event or skirmish must be safety or ballistic glasses whose lenses conform to ANSI Z87.1 standard.

Individual venues may choose to adopt a "full enclosure" policy wherein the "goggle" style variety of airsoft eye-protection are required for play. The lenses of these should conform to ANSI Z87.1 standard.

Mesh-type eye-protection should be capable of withstanding the impact of a 6mm 2joule impact without penetration.

Muzzle energy

From the first of November 2008 the IAA will be enacting a zero tolerance policy with regard to muzzle energies at all affiliated venues. This is in response to a number of shocking reports concerning behavior at non-affiliated venues, the need to distance ourselves from irresponsible behavior and past problems with the implementation of this limitation at affiliated venues in the past. Venues are required to ensure that players are adhering to the CJA2006 limitation of 1joule of muzzle energy (328fps with 0.2g BB). Where equipment is found to be in excess of this it may not be permitted to enter the game zone. Where such a device has been taken into the game zone it must be removed immediately and the player responsible disciplined appropriately. Venues discovered to be habitually ignoring these rules risk losing their IAA affiliation and reports of these practices may be made to the relevant authorities.

Use of Irish Military service uniform

The use of Irish Military Uniform (Irish DPM) is not permitted at any IAA affiliated venue by any participant in games or staff members. The use of Irish Military Uniforms for non-official purposes is illegal in the Republic of Ireland and no IAA Affiliate should tolerate its presence on site.

Use of pyrotechnics

Currently the use of pyrotechnics is restricted to persons holding a license and operating under strict controls. As such any airsoft fragmentation grenade, smoke grenade, thunderflash, thermobarric etc are not to be permitted on an IAA Affiliated site. This rule will be changed as and when the DoJ give permission for their use. The usage of gas and spring powered devices are unaffected by this restriction.

Mandatory safety briefing

A safety briefing outlining the basic safety rules of skirmishing as well as the local site rules must be given to all players attending by a qualified site marshall or venue operator. No players may be permitted to enter the game zone without receiving this brief.

It is understood that some players may arrive late to a skirmish, these players must be told to wait until they have received a safety briefing from a qualified person before being allowed to enter the game zone.

Equipment safety

No player should be allowed to operate an airsoft device that has not been checked by a qualified person using the standard chronograph model. Also, no player should be permitted to enter the game zone with any dangerous objects or accessories attached to their airsoft device. This includes (but is not limited to) Lasers exceeding Class IIIa and rubber bayonets.

IAA Marshals

The IAA committee, by its nature, are likely to be either centralised in one location or spread diffusely through the community. As such, the presence of an IAA accredited marshal is necessary to ensure that venues have official recognition of their adherence to the regulations. Each venue will be expected to have one regular marshal who is accredited by the IAA on their books (not as an employee but a marshal willing to take regular responsibility to ensure the venue is up to code).

Rules of engagement

The IAA has drafted its accepted rules of engagement. It is expected that all IAA affiliated venues will adhere to the basics presented in this document and to not fall below its standards. Venues are encouraged however, to impose stricter standards on themselves and their own "rules of engagement".

IAA Affiliation Display

All IAA Affiliates are entitled to use the IAA logo and name in their correspondence and on any promotional materials. The issuance of a certificate of affiliation will be issued to all venues meeting the requirements and a copy of this should be displayed near the sign in area for visitors and participants to see.

By displaying the IAA affiliate certificate you are informing patrons that there are set standards provided and expected by both parties (the venue and the individual).

Use of land

All IAA Affiliated venues must be on privately held land which is not in use by any other group during the skirmishing period. Any venue which cannot have a physical boundary erected (fencing, walls, cliffs, rivers etc) is deemed to be accessible to the general public and therefore a danger to both the unwary and to the airsoft community. Under no circumstances can a venue hold affiliation should this be the case.

Third Party Insurance

Third party insurance or public liability insurance must be obtained by a venue intending to operate with IAA Affiliation. This insurance must be kept up to date and the documentation made available to both the IAA or relevant authorities should an inspection take place.

Members Regulations

(Code of Conduct effective January 2009)

The following are the revised regulations for members of the IAA.

1. No member should behave in such a manner or engage in any action which brings the pursuit of airsoft into disrepute.
 - 1.1. Behavior and activities which will bring the pursuit into disrepute include (but are not limited to)
 - a) Criminal activity such as robbery or intimidation using an airsoft device.
 - b) Skirmishing on public land or in view of the public where it is likely to cause offense.
 - c) Displaying or brandishing an airsoft device in a manner likely to cause offense.
 - d) Mislead, though the use of airsoft materials, others into believing they are a member of any armed forces group to which they do not hold membership.
2. Members should be aware of and consistently adhere to the basic safety rules regarding airsoft devices and take proper measures to avoid physical injury to themselves and others, property damage and injury to animals.
 - 2.1. This includes the following
 - a) Upgrading an airsoft device past the legal limit.
 - b) Firing an airsoft device at a person or persons who are not wearing the correct protection.
 - c) Attacking pets, wild animals or livestock with airsoft devices.
 - d) Deliberate and willful damage to other people's property.
3. Members must at all times be aware of the nature of their pursuit and the potential for alarm it can cause to the general public. As such, all members are required to ensure that their devices not be transported in such a manner as to cause alarm or distress in the general public and to never brandish an airsoft device in a public place.
 - 3.1. Public places are to include (but are not limited to)
 - a) Housing estates.
 - b) Public woodlands and forest.
 - c) Buildings sites and other large works.
 - d) Any place where a reasonable person may not expect to see airsoft devices.
4. Members must ensure that their personal equipment poses no significant threat to others during its operation and is compliant with the current Irish legislation (CJA2006) by not exceeding the 1 joule limit.
 - 4.1. This includes (but is not limited to)
 - a) Modifications exceeding the 1 joule limit.
 - b) Real, replica or rubber training or "larp" style knives or bayonets.
 - c) Damaged devices which may be dangerous to others.
 - d) Laser modules exceeding class IIIa.
5. Members are required to make themselves familiar with the accepted Rules of Engagement and to act in accordance with those directions superseded by those enforced by the venue they are attending.
6. Members are required to co-operate in every reasonable respect with the authorities.
 - 6.1. This includes (but is not limited to)
 - a) An Garda Síochána
 - b) Customs
 - c) The Department of Justice
 - d) The HSE

7. Members must not engage in skirmishing or operation of airsoft devices while under the influence of perception altering substances including alcohol, narcotics or perscription pharmaceuticals which cause drowsiness.
8. Members must not portray themselves as a representative of the IAA committee or staff without specific written authorisation from the encumbant committee.

The IAA Code of Conduct

(this is the Original text of the IAA code of conduct)

The IAA expects that its members display a certain level of behaviour and while no attempt to make any particular behaviour mandatory will be made, it is in the spirit of the sport of Airsoft and the interest of the IAA that the following guidelines be observed.

- a) IAA members should be reasonably polite towards others on the battlefield and in the safe zones, regardless of whether they are dealing with IAA members or non IAA members.
 - b) IAA members should be aware and constantly adhere to the basic safety rules regarding Airsoft devices and take all reasonable measures to prevent injuries or property damage.
 - c) IAA members should at all times show respect towards the venue that they are attending and refrain from vandalism, graffiti or littering when at same.
 - d) IAA members should always ensure that the devices they employ at a venue, event or during play meet basic safety requirements and pose no threat to themselves or others due to poor maintenance, damage or deliberate alteration to the workings of said devices.
 - e) IAA members should at all times be aware and sensitive of the nature of their sport and the effect it may have on civilians. Where the use of Airsoft devices etc will cause distress to civilians all reasonable efforts should be made to limit, mitigate or avoid such.
 - f) IAA members should at all times be aware of the impact their sport can have on the environment and as such should never use Airsoft devices to harass, intimidate or injure wildlife, livestock or pets and where possible the use of Bio-Degradable BB's and non-cfc/eco-friendly gas is to be encouraged.
 - g) IAA members should co-operate with the authorities where reasonable.
 - h) IAA members should ensure that their insurance and memberships are paid and up to date.
 - i) IAA members should never portray themselves as an official or representative of the IAA without the express permission and authority to do so, granted by the IAA committee.
 - j) IAA members should not consume alcohol or partake of any substances that could impair their judgement while attending an event, venue or while operating an Airsoft device.
 - k) IAA members should show proper respect to the uniforms, insignia etc that they wear and adhere to the specific laws pertaining to the wearing of said apparel.
- IAA members should observe the general rules of fair play, honesty, integrity, honour and safety when actively participating in an event or at a venue

Irish Airsoft Association

Good Chrono Guide

Introduction

To ensure legal compliance with the Criminal Justice Act 2006 (CJA2006) legislation, airsoft devices must be chronographed to ensure they do not exceed the 1 Joule power limitation imposed by the Act.

A chronograph device works by measuring the speed of an object (in this case a BB) passing between two fixed points. It measures the length of time it takes for the object to pass those two points and uses this to calculate the speed, normally in FPS (Feet Per Second) or M/s (Metres per second). Some more advanced chronographs can also calculate the energy level for a given BB weight and measure the Rate of Fire, usually in RPM (Rounds per Minute).

The two fixed points usually found in a chronograph are known as light gates. A light gate consists of two parts, one side transmits light, and the other receives it, as the BB passes through the gate, the light beam is interrupted and the timer starts. As the BB then passes through the second light gate, the timer is stopped. The length of time it takes for the BB to pass through those two points is then used to calculate the number of feet or metres per second the BB travelled.

One very important distinction to make is that of Joules and FPS. The limit set by the CJA2006 is 1 Joule. This equates to the well known 328fps, but only with a standard 0.20g BB. With different BB weights, the fps required to achieve 1 Joule varies. With heavier BBs the fps at 1 Joule is lower.

The table below shows a common list of BB weights and their corresponding speed at 1 Joule.

Energy	BB Weight	FPS	M/s
1 Joule	0.20g	328	100
1 Joule	0.23g	306	93.02
1 Joule	0.25g	294	89.38
1 Joule	0.30g	268	81.47

For this reason, it is important to set a baseline. It is recommended to always chronograph using 0.20g Bbs.

Chronograph procedure

Below are the recommended steps for chronograph testing of an airsoft device prior to gaming:

1. Check the hopup has been turned all the way to it's off position. This should be done by visibly checking the position of the hopup wheel and also by firing a shot in a safe direction.
 1. The BB should have a straight flight path and then drop off. If the BB curves upward dramatically, the hopup has been set high.
 2. Note: At all times for chrono'ing, the hopup should be set to off, a hopup which has been turned up will reduce FPS, however this is not an acceptable method to bring a device's power output down below 1 Joule. For example, if a device chronographs at 1.1 Joule with the hopup off and 1 Joule with the hopup set to full, then it's maximum power output for the purposes of CJA2006 compliance is to be taken as 1.1 Joule and therefore requires mechanical alteration to make it compliant.
2. Ensure the device has been loaded with 0.2g Bbs for the purpose of chronograph testing.
 1. It is recommended to keep a speedloader full of 0.2g Bbs to hand and manually load several Bbs into the magazine prior to testing.
3. Ensure the chronograph device is stable and level
 1. the stability of the chronograph must be ensured by one of the following
 1. Mounted to a tripod and set on a flat and level surface
 2. Placed ontop of a level and secure surface while firing.
 2. It is not acceptable to hold a chronograph device by hand while testing, it must be held secure and level.
4. The airsoft device should be held level and straight in line with the chronograph device. Shots which are fired through the device which are not parallel to the light gates will give erroneous readings.
5. Set the airsoft device to semi automatic (if applicable) and fire through the chronograph device.
6. If a satisfactory reading is given, it is recommended to mark the device in some way, with a small sticker in an inconspicuous location or a tag of some form, especially for skirmishes with a large number of attendees. This means a quick look at a device can ascertain whether or not it has been subjected to testing and should make it easier to determine if a device is on the field of play without having been tested, whether by an oversight or intentional deception.
7. If a device is tested with having an energy level above 1 Joule, that device must not be allowed onto the field of play until it has been mechanically altered and retested.
 1. As above, it is not acceptable to increase the hopup to adjust a devices power output and chronograph operators should ensure to check that the hopup is off on subsequent retesting of the device.

Notes

- 1) It is recommended to purchase a chronograph with a backlit lcd display, this ensures the reading is clearly and accurately read by the operator.
- 2) Chronograph testing is not an exact science, there are many different factors which can affect the reading of a device, including but not limited to; Weather (humidity, temperature), Altitude and Ambient light levels.
- 3) Never shine a light source directly into the light gates of a chronograph device. This will give erroneous readings.

Comparative table of muzzle energies by calibre.

Device	Manufacturer	Model (compared)	Mechanism	Ammunition	Diameter	Weight	Material	Velocity	Energy
Airsoft	n/a	n/a	Automatic Electric*	6mm Airsoft	6mm	0.2gram	Plastic	100m/s	1j
Paintball	n/a	n/a	Compressed Air	.68 Calibre Paintball	17.3mm	3.0gram	PPE Glycol	100m/s	15j
Airgun	RWS	RWS M350	Single Stroke Spring	.177 Calibre Pellet	4.5mm	0.45gram	Steel	381m/s	33j
9mm Pistol	American Eagle	AE9AP	Explosive charge	9X19mm Bullet	9mm	8gram	Lead	350.5m/s	495j
.22 Rifle	Lapua	Midas L 2.6g	Explosive charge	.22 Calibre bullet	5.6mm	2.6gram	Lead	325m/s	137j
6mm Rifle	Remington Arms Inc	Remington Express	Explosive charge	6mm Remington	6mm	6.48gram	Lead	945m/s	2092j

6mm Airsoft information based on any standard 0.2g Airsoft BB propelled from a Automatic Electric Airsoft operating at the legal limit of 1joule

Paintball information based on an average Paintball Marker with a standard .68 calibre paintball

Airgun information based on the manufacturer statistics for the RWS M350 Airgun (<http://www.rws-airguns.com/>)

9mm pistol ammunition statistics taken from Federal Premium Ballistics Ltd (<http://www.federalpremium.com/ballistics>)

.22 Rimfire Long Rifle information taken from the manufacturers specifications (<http://www.lapua.com/index.php?id=898>)

6mm Rifle details based on manufacturer specifications

(http://www.remington.com/products/ammunition/ballistics/comparative_ballistics_results.aspx?data=R6MM4)

All information included as a comparrisson of kinetic muzzle energy

Airsoft devices, like Paintball Markers, do not use an explosive propellant in their respective mechanisms.

*Airsoft electric devices use a electric motor driven piston to compress a small quantity of air behind a BB to propel it.