



Authority for Officer to Carry Firearms

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Reference Number: MTAS-395

Authority of Law Enforcement Officers to Carry Firearms

T.C.A. § 39-17-1315 authorizes "any" law enforcement officer, police officer, county magistrate, retired police officer, and certain Tennessee Emergency Management Agency employees to carry handguns at all times, when authorized to do so by written directive of the chief law enforcement officer of the jurisdiction. A copy of the written directive must be retained by the issuing jurisdiction. This authorization also depends upon such officers completing and continuing to complete annually an eight-hour firearms training course. However, retired police officers are exempt from the firearms training requirement.

T.C.A. § 39-17-1350 authorizes law enforcement officers to carry firearms at all times and all places, while on or off duty, unless otherwise restricted by federal law, lawful orders of a court, or the "written directives" of the executive supervisor of the employing agency. A "law enforcement officer" for the purposes of this statute is "a person who is a full-time employee of the state in a position authorized by the laws of this state to carry a firearm and to make arrests for violations of some or all of the laws of this state, or a full-time police officer who has been certified by the peace officer standards and training commission." However, this law expressly does not extend to a law enforcement officer who:

- carries a firearm onto school grounds or in a school building unless the officer immediately notifies the principal or appropriate administrative staff;
- is consuming or is under the influence of alcoholic beverages or a controlled substance; and
- is not attending a judicial proceeding and is not engaged in the actual discharge of official duties as a law enforcement officer.

It is not clear whether the definition of "law enforcement officer" in T.C.A. § 39-17-1350 applies to T.C.A. § 39-17-1315.

Commissioned reserve or auxiliary police officers may carry firearms in the same manner and to the same extent as a full-time law enforcement officer if authorized to do so in writing by the chief of police. T.C.A. § 39-17-1350.

DISCLAIMER: The letters and publications written by the MTAS consultants were written based upon the law at the time and/or a specific sets of facts. The laws referenced in the letters and publications may have changed and/or the technical advice provided may not be applicable to your city or circumstances. Always consult with your city attorney or an MTAS consultant before taking any action based on information contained in this website.

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