

LEOSA Handgun Qualification Standards

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Former officers have years of experience and training, and only carry weapons for defensive purposes. These former officers, some of whom have aging bodies, are not being dispatched to crimes-in-progress. Furthermore, former officers may be carrying their handgun in a pocket, without a speedloader or spare magazine. For these reasons, it seems unreasonable to require former officers to meet recruit academy handgun standards. Why do former officers have to meet recruit standards to obtain an HR218 certification card?

A: The federal Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act requires former officers to meet “active duty” standards, not an easier “retiree” standard.¹ Wisconsin did not make up its own requirement. Wis. Stat. §175.49 codifies that federal law, requiring that former officers “...meet the standards...for active law enforcement officers...”² Finally, Wis. Stat. §165.85 specifies that the recruit handgun course is the required annual standard required for employment as an active officer.³

Q: The initial drafts of the handgun qualification standard included two courses. The first was the uniformed/patrol/recruit standard, using typical duty belt, 3 magazines, etc. The second course was an “off-duty gun/back-up gun/retiree” course that didn’t shoot past 15 yards, didn’t involve drawing from a holster, didn’t go prone, etc. Why wasn’t the “off-duty/back-up/retiree” course included in the final approved standard?

A: As mentioned above, Wis. Stat. §175.49 requires former officers to meet the standards required for active law enforcement officers. For that reason, the back-up/off-duty/retiree course was removed from the course.

Q: Is the Wisconsin DOJ trying to limit the ability of former officers to carry handguns?

A: No. As a matter of fact, because the Law Enforcement Standards Board (LESB) adopted a state handgun qualification standard, former officers can now be qualified by any LESB-certified Handgun Instructor offering that service. Former officers no longer have to travel to their former agency to qualify, and can schedule a shoot at their own convenience. This should make it easier for former officers to qualify.

¹ [18 USC § 926C\(d\)\(2\)\(B\)](#)

² [Wis. Stat. §175.49\(2\)\(a\)2.](#)

³ [Wis. Stat. §165.85\(4\)\(a\)7.c.](#)

Q: The “Handgun Qualification Course Certificate” issued by an LESB-certified Handgun Instructor specifies the exact firearm used to qualify. When the former agency is preparing the certification card, must the former agency list the specific handgun the former officer is permitted to carry, or does the agency have the option of being more generic? For example, could an agency-issued certification card state the former officer is qualified to carry a “semi-automatic handgun”, or “revolver”, or even just a “handgun”?

A: State statute requires agencies to issue a certification card to qualified former officers who meet all applicable requirements. Wis. Stat. §175.49(2)(a)1. says the card must state, “The type of firearm the former...officer is certified to carry...”. The WisDOJ has made a [certification card template](#) available to agencies on WILENET for their consideration. Agencies must make their own determination regarding the contents of the certification card.

Q: Can a former officer qualify with multiple handguns?

A: Although each “Handgun Qualification Course Certificate” must list the specific firearm used to qualify, former officers are not prohibited from qualifying with multiple handguns and receiving multiple “Handgun Qualification Course Certificates.”