

## the armed senior citizen: prudent equipment for personal defense handguns



As senior citizens, we need all the help we can get in the judicious use of emergency rescue equipment such as the defensive handgun. In this article, I shall discuss two types of equipment that are prudent to employ with your personal defense handgun: laser sights, specifically Crimson Trace Lasergrips, and hollowpoint bullets. These tools help protect innocent bystanders by making defensive handguns safer, more efficient, and more precise. Using them is the responsible thing to do. With proper training, laser sights can make defensive shooting more accurate. Hollowpoint bullets create more stopping power relative to the intended target (the attacker) and reduce the possibility of over penetration.

### Crimson Trace Lasergrips

Crimson Trace Lasergrips replace the stocks of many types of semi-auto pistols and revolvers. When you firmly grip the handgun, an activation button in the grip is depressed. This causes the laser unit to project a beam from the laser aperture, which is aligned with the barrel. Like most sighting devices, the laser unit must be sighted in before use. The laser aperture projects a dot of light onto the target to the same point of aim as the pistol's iron sights. It's a very simple and reliable system.

Also known as laser sights, the use of a laser can replace regular iron sights when it is too dark to see them clearly. However, laser sights are an aid to shooting in less than perfect conditions, and are not a substitute for good training and correct mindset. Any target must still be clearly identified before shooting.

In the case of revolvers, Crimson Trace Lasergrips bring the .38 into the 21st century. They make little .38 Special J-frame snubbies and semi-autos more user friendly in the following ten ways:

1) J-frames typically have vestigial sights and a short sight radius. Laser sighting makes it unnecessary to use these sights. This saves time in an emergency when you have to deploy your firearm quickly. For example, if you were being attacked by a two or four legged creature, you could rapidly acquire a sight picture by projecting the laser dot onto your target. You just need to point and shoot if necessary to save your life or limb.

2) Using a laser can serve as a deterrent. Just like the universally recognized sound of chambering a shell in a pump shotgun, a laser dot on one's chest or face communicates, "Stop your aggression now or be stopped!"

3) Lasergrips are great training tools. They teach muzzle discipline. That is, you learn not to sweep things with your muzzle. They teach trigger control. That is, you learn how big your "wobble zone" is by watching how much the laser dot shakes when it is projected onto your target. You can practice keeping your wobble zone small and the laser dot steady as you smoothly press the trigger. The laser also teaches you how to acquire a good sight picture.

In fact, for those of us with deteriorating eyesight, the bright laser dot above the front sight serves as an aid to seeing our front sight and where our front sight is aimed!

4) Lasergrips help you train to firmly grip your handgun. A firm grip is necessary for many reasons: steady trigger press, recoil control, handgun retention, and adequate cycling of the semi-automatic pistol. Unless you grip the handgun firmly, especially the little J-frame snubby, the Lasergrip will not be activated.

5) Having a set of Crimson Trace Lasergrips on your snubby will give you greater confidence in your ability to accurately and rapidly deploy your weapon should the need arise. However, this requires practice.

6) With your Lasergrips, you can rapidly and accurately deploy your handgun in an emergency from an unconventional or downed position. For example, a student of mine was knocked down by a vicious, attacking German Shepherd. He was able to quickly project the laser dot of his Crimson Trace Lasergrip-equipped .38 onto the dog's snarling mouth and squeeze off a shot. This effectively terminated the dog's aggression, and saved my student's life and limb.

7) Criminal justice statistics reveal that most criminal attacks and gun fights occur in the hours of darkness. Firearm safety rule #3 states: Be sure of your target and what is around and behind it. Laser sights serve several purposes relative to this principle. First, understand that lasers are not the ultimate tool for helping you identify your target. For that, you'll need a good tactical flashlight and a good dose of common sense. However, laser sights can help you to locate your target in the dark. Also, because the laser dot may serve as a deterrent, a laser dot on your target is likely to get a reaction such as, "Don't shoot, I'm in the wrong home."

8) Crimson Trace Lasergrips are made for a wide variety of semi-automatics and revolvers. They are easy to install. You just replace your handgun's grips with the Lasergrips (except for Glocks and Springfield XDs, where the Lasergrips are attached over the polymer grips).

9) Crimson Trace Lasergrips in particular are simple, easy, and natural to deploy. They just require that you firmly grip your handgun. They come sighted in from the factory, but they are adjustable for elevation and windage to fine tune the sighting in. There are no switches to push or buttons to press that could slow you down.

10) Crimson Trace Lasergrips can help you learn point shooting. After sufficient practice with your laser sights turned on, you can switch them off and envision the laser dot as you point your handgun at the target. You will hit dead on. You have developed a muscle memory of how your handgun points.

In summary, Crimson Trace Lasergrips are prudent equipment to have on your personal defense handgun especially if you carry a snubby revolver.

## **Hollowpoint Bullets**

The purpose of deploying your defensive handgun is to stop an attack and save your life and limb. We don't shoot to kill. We shoot to stop an attacker from doing what you were forced to shoot him for doing in the first place (trying to kill you or another innocent). The attacker may die as a result, since we are using deadly force, but that is not our intent. Our intent in using deadly force is to stop deadly force. For that purpose we want to use the biggest caliber we can handle.

Now, there is no magic bullet that has guaranteed instant stopping power. There is no such thing as a "killer bullet" in a handgun caliber. Handguns are inherently less powerful than long guns (rifles and shotguns). However, handguns are what we are most likely to have on or around us when deadly force is necessary for defending against deadly force. For purposes of self-defense the rule of thumb is to use the largest caliber round that we can safely handle. Let's face it, bigger bullets make bigger holes and create larger temporary and permanent wound channels. This translates into greater stopping power. Stopping power is the reason we use deadly force in the form of a firearm in

the first place--to stop a deadly attack.

Now, if a larger caliber bullet has greater stopping power than a smaller caliber bullet, it makes sense that we just might need to shoot fewer bullets to accomplish our goal of stopping the attack. Although we should never count on a one shot stop, and in most cases, a hail of bullets will be necessary to stop a determined bad guy, if we can do the job with fewer bullets, all the better. Fewer bullets fired create less chance of innocent bystanders being hurt. Also, fewer bullet channels in the aggressor means there is a lesser chance of killing the aggressor. So, let's now talk about hollowpoint bullets, and lastly, wadcutters.

Hollowpoint bullets are designed to expand as they penetrate flesh. As they expand, they ideally will create bigger holes and greater temporary and permanent wound channels. Also, expanding slows their penetration. With the proper combination of bullet weight (in grains) and bullet velocity (feet per second), enough momentum (foot/pounds of force) is created to promote optimal penetration. Full metal jacket or hard ball rounds tend to over penetrate in calibers of 9mm and greater. There is always the possibility with hard ball rounds that they can over penetrate, exit the target's body, and keep on traveling. This endangers innocent bystanders.

Of course, it makes sense that we must use whatever appropriate caliber rounds we have on hand should we need to defend our lives. However, the advantage of hollowpoints is that they have the above-described properties, plus they are more humane. More humane? Indeed. As pointed out by Massad Ayoob in his Lethal Force Institute, hollowpoints are more humane because you are likely to need fewer rounds to stop the attacker.

Hollowpoints are not "cop killer bullets" or "armor piercing" as some zealous anti-gunners would have the uninformed erroneously believe. They are modern bullet designs that are manufactured to exacting standards to do what they are designed to do and supposed to do--stop an attacker with minimum collateral damage.

PHOTO ABOVE -- Modern, state of the art, jacketed hollowpoint rounds: Cor-Bon DPX jacketed hollowpoints in .40 S&W and International Cartridge Corporation's frangible jacketed hollowpoints in .45 ACP.

Therefore, unless ruled illegal in your jurisdiction, hollowpoints are recommended over full metal jacket or hard ball. One last point however: full metal jacket and hard ball are still likely to get the job done. Despite arguments to the contrary, they have had a history of doing so for many years. This is especially true in larger calibers such as .40 S&W and .45 ACP in semi-autos. In smaller, less powerful calibers such as .380 ACP, .32 ACP, and .25 ACP, hard ball's extra penetration may be just what is needed to compensate for lack of reliable expansion.

### **On Wadcutters:**

Wadcutter or flat-nosed bullets have been used for years in revolvers for target shooting to make big, round, easy to see holes on paper targets. The bullet design is a lead cylinder internal to the cartridge case, the tip of which is flat and flush with the top of the case.

They generally weigh in the intermediate range in grains but they have a lower powder charge. Thus, they are easier to shoot and promote better second and third shot recovery. They are another viable alternative for defensive carry because you need not worry about bullet expansion and thus, the bullet plugging up with debris. Wadcutters make consistent round holes of the same diameter as their caliber. Remember the rule that bigger holes are better than smaller holes when you are trying to stop someone from killing you. Bigger holes will cause more rapid blood loss and thus, hopefully, more quickly terminate an aggressor's aggression. Add wadcutters to your list of prudent equipment for personal defense handguns.

Lethal Force Institute:  
[www.ayoob.com](http://www.ayoob.com)

Cor-Bon:  
[www.dakotaammo.net](http://www.dakotaammo.net)

International Cartridge Corporation:  
[www.iccammo.com](http://www.iccammo.com)

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