



Changes In Student Cards Aimed At Controlling Cost

THE STATE BUDGET SHORTFALL is old news but its lingering impacts will affect hunter education students beginning in 2009.

Effective 1 January students will no longer receive the plastic certification card free of charge. In its place students will receive a simple postcard confirming their successful completion of hunter education training.

Plastic certification cards will be available to interested students for an \$8 duplicate fee.

In addition to the costs associated with printing the plastic orange certification card, there were fixed labor (preparing labels and letters, stuffing envelopes and affixing labels) and mailing costs (42 cents per letter). While the new postcard confirmation system also has fixed costs, postage costs are lower (27 cents per postcard) and labor is significantly reduced (saving a minimum estimated 200 hours of hunter education staff time per year) since the process is mostly automated.

Hunter education staff—along with everybody else involved in state government—continue to look for ways to reduce operating costs while maintaining current services. While a paper postcard is certainly not as aesthetically pleasing or as durable as the plastic orange certification card, it serves the same

function—at a much reduced cost.

Staff obviously recognize the value to students and parents of the orange certification card. However, the enormity of the budget shortfall currently facing the state and WDFW demands that staff reduce all unnecessary expenditures. If students and parents are interested in the orange certification card they can still obtain it—at a cost of \$8.

Hunter education instructors using the traditional “bubble” forms will not notice any changes. Chief instructors will still complete a form for each student enrolled in class. Records will still be processed in the Olympia office but the end product received by the student will be a postcard.

In addition to the postcard in lieu of a plastic certificate, hunter education division staff are evaluating other changes to help control costs and improve public service.

Proposed ideas include:

- ◆ A mandatory WILD I.D. number for all deferral applications;
- ◆ A simplified application for hunter education duplicate (plastic) cards.
- ◆ Expanded use of the hunter education web site to disseminate public information.

Online Registration *May* Be Here In 2009

IMAGINE a hunter education world with no bubble forms!

Imagine a hunter education world with an extra half-hour of instructional time in hunter education class!

Imagine a hunter educa-

tion world where students can print their (paper) certification card at the end of class—with no delay!

If you can imagine such a world, you can already envision *some* of the benefits associated with online registration. Instructors with updated e-mail addresses

on file with Olympia staff will receive information about online registration if and when it becomes available in 2009. If you didn't receive this newsletter via e-mail, it means hunter education staff do not yet have a working e-mail address on file for you.

Inside this issue:

2009 Instructor Incentive Permit Application	2
Field Notes	3
Incident Anatomy 101: What Went Wrong?	4
Multi-Season Tag Applications	5
From The Desk Of Lt. Crown	7

Dates To Remember

- March 24 – Marysville, Regional IST
- March 28 – Chelan, Regional IST
- March 29 – Toledo, Regional IST

Important Contacts

- Olympia: 1-800-215-1979
- Chuck Ray: 1-800-468-5006
- E-mail: huntered@dfw.wa.gov
- Blog: <http://hunter-education.blogspot.com>

Incentive Application

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE APPLICATION below is only for eligible instructors who were certified on or before January 31, 2006. Please read the information below to insure you are eligible.

Hunter Education Instructor Incentive Permit Application

Enclosed is my instructor incentive application for: (Circle Only One Type) Turkey Big Game

I acknowledge that submitting this application confirms my eligibility to apply for an instructor incentive permit. I also attest to the fact that I have not received an instructor incentive permit within the past 10 years.

Instructor # First Certified

Name: WILD I.D. Number:

Current Mailing Address:

City State Zip

E-mail Daytime Phone: Evening Phone:

Return To: Department of Fish and Wildlife, Hunter Education Division, 600 Capitol Way N, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

Hunter Education Instructor Incentive Permit Drawings

Send All Requests For Ammo Through Chuck Or Dan

Qualifying hunter education instructors in the Evergreen State will have another opportunity in 2009 to receive special deer, elk, moose or turkey permits available only to certified instructors through a random drawing.

The column above contains the application card to copy and remit. Eligible instructors are only those who have been in "active" status for a minimum of three years by January 31. Previous instructor incentive permit recipients are ineligible to apply for 10 years. There is no charge to apply for these permits.

Unsure about your initial certification date? Please check the new instructor identification card we recently mailed you. The new ID card lists your initial certification date. Instructors certified after 1/31/06 are not eligible to apply for this year's incentive permit drawings.

Ineligible applications will be discarded without notice.

Again this year instructors must first decide whether to apply for a turkey or big game permit. Turkey permits will be drawn February 15. Big game permits will be drawn March 1.

PLEASE REMEMBER to send any requests for ammunition through Chuck Ray or Dan Boes. All ammo requests must be approved in advance.

Generally speaking, WDFW will reserve ammo for either (1) New teaching teams, or, (2) Teaching teams that do not charge any fees or request any donations.

WDFW hunter education ammunition costs have increased substantially in the past year. While some teaching teams have been very successful in obtaining resources to provide for their ammunition needs, other teaching teams are less fortunate and sometimes rely on out-of-pocket expenses. Obviously, we don't want instructors to subsidize costs for student range activities.

Field Notes: News, Views And More....

Remember

Policy: Instructors charging a fee of more than \$5 per student are required to get approval in writing in advance! This policy applies to every instructor and every team.

New instructor certification cards were mailed to all instructors in early December. The magnet-backed cards are designed to be worn in class and feature the WDFW logo along with instructor name and initial certification date.

The magnet is very powerful and anybody wearing a Pacemaker device should check first with their medical provider before wearing it.

Harold Costa, WHEIA, is asking for volunteers to assist at the 2009 Youth Expo, to be held in Olympia May 8 – 9. Once again *thousands* of participants are expected to attend!

The Washington Hunter Education Instructors Association runs the ever-popular air gun range. Instructors who attend get free camping and free BBQ both Thursday and Friday nights. Contact Harold at (360) 425-9648 or via e-mail at hcosta1945@wmconnect.com

Frank DuMars, Mason County, has enthusiastically embraced the online evaluation program: In fact, Frank now conducts about one class per month. Frank writes:

“Consider doing the test and skills evaluation for online students. There are normally only one to three students at a time so you tailor the class to their needs. It takes about six hours, and thanks to Chuck Ray there is practically no paperwork. The students have already done the boring part, so all you do is the fun stuff! If you want more specific information, please give me a call at (360) 482-2945”

Brian Peters, Clark County, came up with a g-r-e-a-t suggestion, which we plan to implement in January. Brian suggested that we e-mail instructors to acknowledge receipt of bubble forms and course reports. Brian knows that once the bubble forms arrive in the Olympia office, student (now post)cards are out the door within 24 hours.

Although we had hoped to implement Brian’s idea during the fall, we just couldn’t manage it on a regular basis. Well done, Brian!

John Wisner, WDFW, spent his elk season in Lewis County, where he personally saw evidence of several elk suffering hoof rot. Here’s what some of our biologists reported to us:

“We are working on a proposal to collect some of the affected animals to learn more about the condition. There are about 40 different causes of hoof rot and lameness in ungulates, and it’s important to have fresh samples to get an answer.

Many of the elk in the Cowlitz lowlands are reported to be suffering from some level of hoof rot. The best advice is to not shoot any elk that is limping or looks poorly.

If a hunter shoots an elk with hoof rot, simply cut away that portion of the leg and do not eat it. Use your nose as a tool to decide if the meat is spoiled. If a hunter-killed animal has this disease throughout its body the hunter should contact WDFW.”

Attaboys (and girls) and kudos:

“As an active father of five, I wanted to give my children some real firearm training. My biggest concern about taking a class was that it might not be very “real” in a classroom situation. I was also concerned about my son’s attention span. Neither of these were an issue.

Safe hunting is something that has a deep, almost religious, meaning to our instructor. His classroom

preparation and real life experience provided all of us with the most interesting and meaningful class I have ever experienced. While I will most likely never hunt, the information will help us hike safely with hunters.

I especially liked the teacher’s approach. He was able to make a very serious topic so interesting that it became the topic of conversation at our dinner table. He wasn’t there to pass everybody nor was he there to fail anybody. He took a very unique personal interest in my kids to make sure they were comfortable, confident and safe around firearms. He was willing to meet before or stay after to help students should the situation require. His mission was to make safe “hunters” out of all of his students—meaning that they would be safe enough to hunt with him. He taught with a passion only a volunteer could provide.

It was a long program after a day at work/school, but well worth the effort. I wish this instructor taught something else! In fact, I plan to take his class again in a couple years when my next son is of age.”

JAN’s Corner

Best wishes to all instructors and their families during this Holiday Season.

There will be some big changes in hunter education in the weeks and months ahead and I want all of you to know that I’m only a phone call away. My direct line is (360) 902-8112 (28112 if you are entering the phone queue via the toll-free line).

Remember to stop by and visit our office if you are traveling to the Olympia area during 2009.

Keep up the good work... And good luck keeping all of your New Year’s Resolutions!

Incident Anatomy 101: What Went Wrong?

BETWEEN AUGUST 1 AND NOVEMBER 30 four fatal incidents have been reported to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Although incident investigations continue with two of them, these broad details are currently known:

Fatal Incident One

The 14 year-old hunter was bear hunting with his 16 year-old brother. Without the benefit of binoculars he used his rifle scope to view a dark-colored hiker hunched over less than 100 yards away. He made the decision to fire and killed the 51 year-old female hiker, who had been walking on a popular hiking trail.

Obviously these two hunters failed to demonstrate good judgment afield. While the victim's dark clothing and weather conditions may have been contributing factors, two operative safety rules were violated. (1) *Never* use a rifle scope in lieu of binoculars (since the shooter has already assumed a firing position). (2) *Always* be sure of your target. The shooter has been charged and a trial date was scheduled for late December 2008.

Fatal Incident Two

The shooter, victim and victim's cousin were deer hunting. The victim dropped the other two hunters off for them to beat the brush and then drove to a rendezvous point to pick them up. As the victim waited in his pick-up truck at the rendezvous location the shooter approached from behind, released the firearm's floor plate to remove ammunition from the magazine, then worked the action to remove the round in the chamber. While working the action the rifle discharged, and the bullet passed through a metal tube gate and grazed the tailgate before shattering the rear window and striking the victim in the back of the head.

Poor muzzle control was obviously a key factor in this incident. Unloading a firearm is a basic skill necessary for all safe hunters, but this particular hunter compounded his muzzle control problem by also declaring to investigating officers "I always hunt with my safety off."

Fatal Incident Three

This incident is still under investigation, but the alleged shooter fled the scene and did not turn himself in to authorities.

The shooter shot and killed a brush picker, apparently mistaking him for a game animal. Based on tips and investigative clues an individual has been arrested and charged .

Fatal Incident Four

A waterfowl hunter was reported overdue and his body was subsequently found. He died of gunshot wounds caused when his shotgun discharged when the trigger apparently brushed against something.

Elected officials have previously expressed concern over the first hunting incident—which was reported in great detail across the state—and it is very likely that the unusually high number of fatalities this year will stimulate additional questions from members of the legislature when they convene in January. While no legislation has been proposed as of this writing, WDFW officials have already expressed support for legislation that reinstates a requirement for supervision of juvenile hunters afield.

Poor hunting skills (e.g., loading, unloading, muzzle control) and poor hunter judgment (mistaking a victim for a game animal or covering a fellow hunter while swinging on a bird) account for almost 75% of all hunting incident causes in all age groups. Enhanced supervision for juvenile hunters in the field can certainly help reduce overall incident numbers—but only for *juvenile* hunters. The fact remains that non-juvenile hunters account for the majority of shooters and victims in hunting incidents... which gets back to the basic requirements for hunter training and hunter judgment for all.

Currently hunter education training is a once-in-a-lifetime requirement; the expectation is that the knowledge and skills imparted and developed in our training programs will be retained and applied over a *lifetime* of hunting. It is not likely that legislators will look at hunter retraining or hunter re-testing, so their focus may well be on the content and curriculum involved in basic hunter education training. Each of the above incidents—indeed, almost every single hunting incident ever recorded in our state—violates one or more rules emphasized and re-emphasized in our current training program. The necessary content is already in place and it's really up to each one of us involved in hunter education to make sure that our students are tested and skill-evaluated to be certain they can demonstrate the knowledge and skill sets necessary to be safe hunters afield.

Student Evaluations Indicate High Levels Of Satisfaction

THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING and judging by the evaluations of 1,781 individuals since March 2007 a large percentage of our students find hunter education to be a tasty training treat! To be sure there have occasionally been strong negative comments ('Grouchy instructors!'), but the positive perceptions far outweighed the negative ones. Indeed, almost every respondent reported that they learned the information needed to become a safe hunter.

Each hunter education graduate between March 2007 and December 2008 received the survey questions below; responses were anonymous and voluntary, and participants were required to provide their own postage-paid response envelopes. Below is a summary of how those individuals ranked these hunter education items:

Question	Responses On 1 – 5 Scale (5 = top)
Was the instructor well prepared for each class?	97% of respondents rated 4 or 5
Did the instructor teach in an interesting way?	91% of respondents rated 4 or 5
Did students have a chance to ask questions?	97% of respondents rated 4 or 5
Did students understand the instructor's directions and/ or explanations?	83% of respondents rated 4 or 5
Did the instructor give individual attention to the students who needed it?	96% of respondents rated 4 or 5
Did the instructor start and finish on time?	93% of respondents rated 4 or 5
Was the <i>Student Manual</i> useful to you?	95% of respondents rated 4 or 5
Did the visual aids used in class help you understand the course material better?	95% of respondents rated 4 or 5
Was the written test fair?	96% of respondents rated 4 or 5
Was the classroom comfortable?	81% of respondents rated 4 or 5
Did you feel you learned the information you needed to become a safe hunter?	99% Yes
Would you recommend this class to your friends?	98% Yes
Do you plan to buy a hunting license this year?	89% Yes

Open-ended questions allowed students to write additional comments...and write some students did! Although comments were literally all over the map, some broad themes emerged. Classroom comfort (or lack thereof) generally topped the list in terms things least liked in hunter education, followed closely by class length (with a general dislike of classes longer than 2-1/2 hours). As for things that students thoroughly enjoyed and wanted more of, hands-on activities and effective training aids were favorite comments.

Unless we offer online registration opportunities for students, future student evaluations such as this will also become victim in our search for economy and efficiency (since we mail each graduate a survey). If we can implement online registration we can still provide surveys to individuals with e-mail addresses, even though it will tend to skew our sample responses (since only those with e-mail addresses will have an opportunity to respond).

From The Desk Of Lt. Crown: Looking At The Law

HOW DO YOU FIND THE ANSWER for a class question that has never been asked of you before? (No, this is not a trick question!) Chief instructors and fellow hunter education teaching team members obviously represent a wealth of knowledge, but how do *you* proceed when there is no readily-available answer to a thorny question?

While it's true that the majority of questions students pose are fairly common and require only a simple direct answer, there may be some that call for an interpretation of the law. This is one area in which all instructors should proceed as if they are already on thin ice and they can hear crackling and can see open water beneath them.

Easy questions—such as “What is the minimum caliber requirement for hunting big game?” or “What is the bag limit for grouse?” can be easily be answered and confirmed by referring students to the appropriate page in the annual *Hunting Seasons & Rules* pamphlet or RCW or WAC citation.

But “What if...” questions almost always require a degree of judgment and analysis that goes far beyond the basic facts at hand—they often can't be answered with a

simple reference. A good example is “How far do I have to be off the road before I can legally shoot?” or “What if I am baiting deer with apples and a bear happens to come within shooting range? Can I legally shoot the bear?”

The point here is not to avoid (potentially) tough questions but to make sure that any answers provided in hunter education classes are authoritative and accurate. All of us have heard the excuse “Well, X told me that was the law!” While opinions issued by court judges carry the weight of law, those shared informally in a hunter education classroom are just that—opinions.

“I don't know the answer to that question because it requires an interpretation of law” is often the best response to those questions that seem to elicit an opinion-type response. You can restate what the law actually says and explain that providing any further opinion is best reserved for law enforcement officers, county prosecutors and judges. Beyond that it is up to the student or parent to further pursue the answer.

Research what you can, refer to others when you have to and remember that your answers reflect on all of us.

New Instructor Schedule For 2009

THE FORMER PRE-SERVICE TRAINING program has been discontinued. In its place Chuck Ray and Dan Boes now serve as lead evaluators for weekend classes that insure applicant candidates demonstrate their practical skills in a hunter education course.

All applicants are required to complete one of the six weekend programs below prior to certification:

April 17 – 19	Lewis County
April 24 – 25	Douglas County
June 26 – 27	Walla Walla
July 17 – 19	Pierce County
August 29 – 30	Pend Oreille Cty
September 11 – 13	Clark Cty

Applicants will receive mileage and per diem reimbursement to partici-

pate in these practical class.

As preparation for these weekend classes, new instructor candidates will be required to work with existing chief instructors to become familiar with the hunter education program and “learn the ropes.” Whether it's registering students, grading tests or teaching different sections of the curriculum, we all know the way to build skill and confidence is by doing. The new certification process allows applicants to work with mentor instructors to learn and demonstrate skills as they prepare for the weekend evaluation programs.

Please note that Chuck Ray (eastern Washington) and Dan Boes (western Washington) assign all instructors to mentors. If you are a chief instructor and are interested, please contact Chuck or Dan

directly.

“Why change a good thing like the PST?” is a question we've already heard from some instructors. While the former PST process was enjoyable and informative, it was also very time intensive. More importantly, there was always a high rate of attrition, with only 90+ instructors attaining certification in an average year. High applicant interest didn't always translate into a successful new hunter education instructor, leading us to change to the current format for 2009.

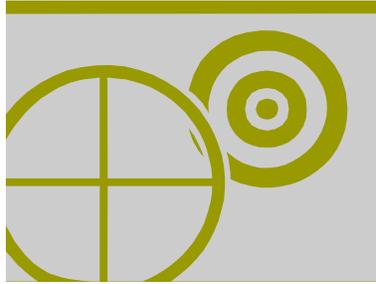
One of the key components to success in this new approach is a close relationship between the new applicant and existing chief instructors. Contact Chuck or Dan to see how you can help.

Planning Continues For Regional IST Programs In 2009

THE STATE'S BUDGET WOES remain a source of worry for all of us....but the hunter education division is still planning to implement the regional IST program mentioned in earlier newsletters. Indeed, the schedule for the three westside programs is on the front page of this newsletter.

All certified hunter education instructors are invited to attend.

Unlike years past, instructor participation at ISTs will be optional, not mandatory. The focus for 2009 will be on meeting with hunter education and regional enforcement staff, discussing emerging hunter education issues and presenting hunter education instructor awards.



Barring additional unforeseen problems with the budget, WDFW hunter education division staff are planning to provide lunch for all instructors who attend. If, however, further bad news requires us to forgo a paid lunch we will ask instructors to consider a pot-luck.

Since the IST schedule is regional, closer to many instructors and scheduled to conclude by 3:00 p.m., no overnight travel is

required, further reducing costs.

Although the "old style" IST (with a weekend in Yakima) still remains engrained in the minds of some instructors, it's important to remember that the original ISTs were short evening or weekend meeting dates. The 2009 switch to the regional format will be different from Yakima—but we're hoping that you will agree that it will be just as informative.

2009 IST Schedule

March 24	Marysville
March 28	Chelan
March 29	Toledo
April 4	Ravensdale
April	Date / location TBA
May	Date / location TBA

THE WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Hunter Education Program
600 Capitol Way North
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98501-1091

Online learning now available at www.hunter-ed.com/wa/

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"Safety First"

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