

KEEPING UP WITH FIREARMS EVOLUTION:

A firearm is a vital tool for a law enforcement officer. As firearms and the needs of law enforcement evolve, it is important to provide up-to-date standards to ensure that firearms produced for U.S. law enforcement are fit for purpose and continue to meet the needs of U.S. law enforcement officers.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) develops and publishes voluntary equipment standards that specifically address the needs of law enforcement, corrections and other criminal justice agencies to ensure that equipment is safe, reliable and performs according to established minimum performance requirements. NIJ standards are consensus-based and designed to articulate the criminal justice end user community's operational requirements regarding equipment performance. They are designed to provide a level of confidence in a product's fitness for purpose and allow comparison of products based on standardized test methods. NIJ maintains active standards for a variety of equipment, including ballistic-resistant body armor, stab-resistant body armor,

restraints, bomb suits, CBRN protective ensembles and offender tracking systems.

NIJ recently established a Special Technical Committee (STC) for Law Enforcement Firearms. The purpose of the STC will be to update NIJ Standard 0112.03 (Revision A), *Autoloading Pistols for Police Officers*, and NIJ Standard 0113.00, *12-Gauge Shotguns for Police Use*, and to develop a new minimum performance standard for patrol rifles. The STC includes firearms subject-matter experts from federal, state and local enforcement agencies; test laboratories; and individuals knowledgeable in standards development and product certification.

The committee is currently working to articulate minimum performance requirements that U.S. law enforcement should demand of their pistols, rifles



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and shotguns, and also describe how laboratories should test firearms to determine conformance to the requirements. Factors such as service life; durability; exposure to environmental conditions such as heat, cold, water and sand; and resistance to mechanical shock will be considered. NIJ anticipates that initial drafts of the three standards will be published for public comment in 2019.

The firearms standards development effort is ongoing. More information on NIJ standards is available at <http://www.nij.gov/standards>.

