



# SAFETY ALERT!

## Weapon related incidents

The purpose of this safety alert is to alert employers and employees of the risk and consequences associated with mishandling weapons in the workplace.

## Background

South African Police Services (SAPS) recently released statistics that show that, for a second year in a row, violence and crime-related incidents have gone up. South Africans spent no less than **R 140 billion** last year in crime-prevention, including purchasing weapons and acquiring the services of armed response and security companies.

MAKROSAFE clients reported **19** incidents in 2013 where employees got injured after a weapon trigger went off in the workplace. Altogether, **639** productivity days were lost accumulating to a total cost of **R 163,306.00**. One armed response officer was patrolling in a neighbourhood when he was confronted by several armed intruders who had just ransacked a house. Shootings took place in which multiple gunshots were fired and the officer got injured on the right cheek, his hand as well as the left thigh. The officer was booked off duty for **115 days** and his recovery cost the company **R 22,963.00**.

## Contributing factors

- The gun used by the armed response officer was no match to the high calibre rifles used by the criminals.
- The officer wasn't focused when doing his job as he was looking for his coffee mug when he drove into the ambush.
- To help him see the interior of his car while looking for the mug, he accidentally switched on the interior light, thereby, exposed himself to the criminals.
- The officer had taken off his Kevlar helmet as he felt more comfortable without the helmet.
- The car wasn't fit with a bulletproof windscreen.
- It took too long for backup to arrive to assist the officer in fighting the criminals.
- The firing accuracy of the officer wasn't tested before he was deployed in what was known to be a violent area.
- The officer had been on a 16 hours duty shift for multiple days in a row and was close to exhaustion.

## Action Required

- Fatigue and loss of focus must be factored in when a duty roster is being drafted
- Backup must always be available, immediately, to anybody expected to provide safety and security.
- Security officials must be equipped and be well-armed to fend off any identified threat.
- Equipment and vehicles must contribute to the safety and protection of the security officer.
- A system must be put in place to establish the alertness, accuracy and safety of security officers on duty.

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