



Passing on

What action is required when a certificate holder dies?
By Laura Saunbury, solicitor and shotgun licencing advisor.

When anyone dies, there is much to be done to settle their affairs. It is therefore understandable that the question of what to do with that person's shotguns may not be at the forefront of everyone's minds, especially if those left with the task are not shooters themselves.

However, in these times where the police and general public are quick to criticise or judge shooters, we owe it to ourselves to be proactive and thus be seen to be acting responsibly. Accordingly, there are a number of steps I would suggest when a fellow shooter dies.

Unless there is another member of the same household who also holds a shotgun certificate, then clearly the deceased's guns cannot remain where they are. It is all the more urgent to move the guns where the premises is left unoccupied following the death, since vacant premises can be targeted by burglars. If there was a will in which the deceased left their shotguns to a particular individual, there should be no reason why they can't be transferred immediately to that other individual. In the absence of a will, or if there are delays locating the will, or it makes no specific provisions as to whom the guns are to be given, the guns should as soon as possible be temporarily transferred for safekeeping to another member of the family who holds a shotgun certificate, or failing that to a registered firearms dealer. Bear in mind most dealers will charge storage fees, a cost which will have to be borne out of the deceased's estate. Naturally, any transfer, whether temporary or permanent, should be notified within seven days to the relevant Police firearms licencing departments. The force which issued the deceased's certificate should also be informed of the death without delay and the certificate surrendered to them as soon as it can be located.

If you know a certificate holder who has died, I would suggest you contact the next of kin or a close family member, and politely draw the above to their attention. If you are that next of kin or close relative, then you will want to discuss these matters with the solicitors who are administering the estate. A competent probate solicitor ought to be able to make the necessary arrangements, notify the Police of the death, and to whom the shotguns have been transferred thereafter. However, if you become concerned that the solicitors have failed to act, either due to other pressures or through a lack of experience in dealing with firearms, as a member

did who contacted me recently for advice, I would recommend that you take it upon yourself to contact the deceased's firearms licencing officer to inform them of the situation. At least then you can rest easy knowing you have done everything you could as a responsible certificate holder.



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