



U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
Firearms and Explosives

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www.atf.gov

OPEN LETTER TO ALL FEDERAL EXPLOSIVES LICENSEES AND PERMITTEES

TABLE OF DISTANCE REQUIREMENTS

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has recently revisited its guidelines for the application of the tables of distances for the storage of certain explosive materials.

The storage of blasting agents and ammonium nitrate, when located in the proximity of high explosives or other blasting agents, is subject to the distance limitations prescribed in the tables of distances at 27 CFR 555.218 and 555.220. Until recently, ATF's guidelines for determining the minimum required separation distance between high explosives and blasting agents or ammonium nitrate included considering (1) the weight of the high explosives as the donor weight under the table at 555.220; and (2) the higher weight of the explosives materials (high explosives or blasting agents) as the donor under the table at 555.218. The greater of the two distances was required for the separation of the magazines. Further, the guidelines for determining required distances between two blasting agent magazines required using the higher blasting agent weight as the donor under both tables. Again, the greater distance would apply.

Pursuant to recent research into the information and guidelines used to create the aforementioned tables, ATF is amending and simplifying the procedures for determining the minimum separation distance for blasting agents and ammonium nitrate, when located in the proximity of high explosives or other blasting agents.

When a blasting agent or ammonium nitrate is located near high explosives, the new guidelines for application of these tables are as follows:

- Calculate the distance using the table at 555.220, with the high explosives as the donor—the column to be used is based upon the acceptor material.
- Calculate the distance using the table at 555.218, with the blasting agent as the donor (ammonium nitrate alone is not a donor under any circumstances).
- The more restrictive of these two distances will be the minimum required distance between the magazines.

- The table at 555.218 will continue to be used to determine the required distance to inhabited buildings, highways and passenger railways.
- When it is necessary to determine the minimum required distance from detonator storage to blasting agent storage, the detonator magazine is always the donor (see second footnote to the table at 555.218). However, in accordance with the above conclusions, the table at 555.220 – not the table at 555.218 – must be used for this calculation.

To determine the minimum required distance between blasting agent storage and other blasting agents or ammonium nitrate:

- Only the table at 555.220 is to be used.
- The weight (row) to be used is based upon the donor material.
- The column to be used is based upon the acceptor material.

Please feel free to contact ATF's Explosives Industry Programs Branch at 202-648-7120 or via e-mail at EIPB@atf.gov if you have any questions regarding these procedures. For assistance applying table of distance requirements to specific storage situations, please contact the local ATF office. ATF office contact information may be found on our website at <http://www.atf.gov/field/>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chad J. Yoder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "C".

Chad J. Yoder