

ATF Q&As: 3-D Printing of Firearms

Public Affairs Division – Washington, D.C.

ATF Public Affairs
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3-D Printing Technology of Firearms

1. Is ATF aware of the new 3-D printing technology producing firearms?

Yes. ATF routinely collaborates with the firearms industry and law enforcement to monitor new technologies and current manufacturing trends that could potentially impact the safety of the public.

2. What say does ATF have in the technology used to produce firearms?

ATF enforces Federal firearms laws and, currently, these laws do not limit the technology or processes that may be used to produce firearms. However, ATF enforces existing statutes and investigates any cases in which technological advances allow individuals to avoid complying with these laws.

3. What is ATF doing in regards to people making their own firearms?

An individual may generally make a firearm for personal use. However, individuals engaged in the business of manufacturing firearms for sale or distribution must be licensed by ATF. Additionally, there are certain restrictions on the making of firearms subject to the National Firearms Act.

4. What will ATF do if a prohibited person is manufacturing a firearm?

When ATF receives credible information regarding the illegal possession of firearms, it will investigate and take appropriate action. If individuals neglect to follow Federal laws and regulations surrounding firearms, ATF will investigate their activities.

5. What is ATF doing to make sure this technology is monitored so it is not used illegally?

ATF makes every effort to keep abreast of novel firearms technology and firearms trafficking schemes.

6. Can an individual now manufacture these firearms and sell them?

Any person “engaged in the business” as a manufacturer must obtain a license from ATF.

- The term "**engaged in the business**" means— (A) as applied to a manufacturer of firearms, a person who devotes time, attention, and labor to manufacturing firearms as a regular course of trade or business with the principal objective of livelihood and profit through the sale or distribution of the firearms manufactured.

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7. Who can obtain a Federal Firearms License (FFL)?

ATF will approve the application for license if the applicant:

- Is 21 years of age or older;
- Is not prohibited from shipping, transporting, receiving or possessing firearms or ammunition;
- Has not willfully violated the GCA or its regulations;
- Has not willfully failed to disclose material information or willfully made false statements concerning material facts in connection with his application;
- Has a premises for conducting business;
- The applicant certifies that:
 1. the business to be conducted under the license is not prohibited by State or local law in the place where the licensed premises is located;
 2. within 30 days after the application is approved the business will comply with the requirements of State and local law applicable to the conduct of the business;
 3. the business will not be conducted under the license until the requirements of State and local law applicable to the business have been met;
 4. the applicant has sent or delivered a form to the chief law enforcement officer where the premises is located notifying the officer that the applicant intends to apply for a license; and
 5. secure gun storage or safety devices will be available at any place in which firearms are sold under the license to persons who are not licensees (“secure gun storage or safety device” is defined in 18 U.S.C. 921(a)(34)).

[18 U.S.C. 923(d)(1), 27 CFR 478.47(b)]

8. How does one apply for a license?

The applicant must submit ATF Form 7 (5310.12), Application for License, with the appropriate fee in accordance with the instructions on the form to ATF.

9. If an individual makes an item that falls into the “any other weapon” category is that individual required to register the item?

Yes, an “any other weapon” category is an NFA classification which requires an individual to register the item with ATF.

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10. What does “any other weapon mean?”

The term “any other weapon” means any weapon or device capable of being concealed on the person from which a shot can be discharged through the energy of an explosive, a pistol or revolver having a barrel with a smooth bore designed or redesigned to fire a fixed shotgun shell, weapons with combination shotgun and rifle barrels 12 inches or more, less than 18 inches in length, from which only a single discharge can be made from either barrel without manual reloading, and shall include any such weapon which may be readily restored to fire. Such term shall not include a pistol or a revolver having a rifled bore, or rifled bores, or weapons designed, made, or intended to be fired from the shoulder and not capable of firing fixed ammunition.

11. Is a firearm illegal if it is made of plastic?

It is unlawful for any person to produce a firearm as proscribed in 18 U.S.C. 922(p).

- “It shall be unlawful for any person to manufacture, import, sell, ship, deliver, possess, transfer, or receive any firearm—
(A) that, after removal of grips, stocks, and magazines, is not as detectable as the Security Exemplar, by walk-through metal detectors calibrated and operated to detect the Security Exemplar; or
(B) any major component of which, when subjected to inspection by the types of x-ray machines commonly used at airports, does not generate an image that accurately depicts the shape of the component. Barium sulfate or other compounds may be used in the fabrication of the component.”

More information on ATF can be found at www.atf.gov.

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