

Shooter Alert: Unplanned Discharge

During our testing of the Christensen Arms Carbon One rifle, we experienced problems with an “unplanned discharge.”

During our field testing, when an expected shot did not materialize, the shooter placed the safety in the On position. Soon thereafter, the shooter attempted to fire the rifle without first taking off the safety—a common oversight in the field. Realizing the problem, the shooter then pushed the safety off, and the gun fired without his touching the trigger. To verify that the incident wasn’t operator error, we later duplicated the problem several times with an empty rifle.

Also, if the rifle was held with the muzzle down, the gun would fail to cock when the bolt was lifted. We suspected that both of these problems were part of the same trigger/safety malfunction.

We can’t conclusively say, however, that these problems were the fault of Christensen Arms. Because of short retail supplies, we received a loaner product to serve as our test gun. It had been handled by several other users, and one of them may have attempted to adjust the trigger, and in the process damaged the rifle.

In fact, because the trigger pull was below the advertised 1.5 pounds when we took delivery of the rifle, we suspected that an incompetent person may have attempted to adjust the trigger. Upon disassembling the gun we found that the trigger-adjustment screw was indeed backed out. Apparently, it was never treated with a thread locker. Thus, we couldn’t determine if the adjustment was done intentionally or if it occurred due to vibration during use.

We readjusted the trigger to break at 1 3/4 pounds, but that did not cure the problem. A Christensen representative said that the company’s guns and triggers are safe unless they’re tampered with, and that we should return the test Carbon One to the factory.

Since we deemed the rifle to be unsafe to shoot at that point, we shipped it back to Christensen Arms to be checked out and repaired. In a future issue, we plan to check out the Carbon One’s trigger in a retail-ready sample to assess its safety performance.

We want to make this point crystal clear: We are not blaming Christensen Arms for this serious safety problem; at this point, we can’t conclusively assess where the problem originated. Nonetheless, during our testing, we did experience a dangerous condition during our handling of the Carbon One. We felt it was incumbent on us to inform you of the problem we encountered.

Our experience also serves as a reminder that any precision trigger operates under minimum tolerances and can quickly get out of adjustment, causing a dangerous situation. All adjustments should be locked in place with a thread locker, and shooters should never break the most basic safety rule—always point the muzzle in a safe direction.



Above: The adjustable trigger on the Carbon One would discharge in certain situations. We found a screw on the trigger that was backed out too much, which allowed the sear to fall too easily. However, we don’t know if the loaner gun came from the factory like that or if someone had improperly adjusted the trigger. Christensen said the trigger is safe to operate as it comes from the factory.