

Forthcoming ISSF Rule changes for 2026

The ISSF Rifle Committee, assisted by members of the Technical and Athlete's Committees, have attempted to address the matter of the seemingly ever-increasing stiffness of jackets and trousers in current use by athletes competing in the Rifle discipline, particularly in the Air Rifle and Three-Positional (Standing) events.

Our existing Rule 6.7.4.2 prohibits the use of, "special devices, means or clothing, which immobilizes or unduly reduces the movement of the athlete's legs, body or arms". It has become apparent that the high scores being achieved by athletes, particularly juniors who have been shooting for a relatively short period of time, has only become possible because of the artificial support provided by the stiffness of clothing that they are using. It is a fundamental principle in all sport that medal-winning performances should be due to the skill of the athlete without artificial assistance which could be regarded as "technological doping".

Apart from the physical assistance provided by the stiff clothing, the fact that athletes walking to and from the Field of Play, particularly in Finals, are unable to walk 'normally' but robotically stiff-legged, has drawn adverse comments from IOC observers at the last two Olympics. This has had a detrimental effect on the Sport because we are concerned with the overall appearance and presentation to a wider 'non-shooting' audience. All new shooting jackets and trousers will become less stiff with constant use, but anecdotal evidence has shown that some shooting federations provide new clothing for their top athletes on a regular basis, obviously to benefit from the stiffness provided by new equipment. This has created an unfair system because not every federation, nor individual athlete who is self-funding, can afford such a luxury!

Our current Rules and testing procedures concerning clothing have remained unchanged for over twenty years, and whilst those were appropriate to regulate the clothing being used in those times, development of materials used and manufacturing techniques have superseded those Rules and made them ineffective in restricting the advantage offered by modern equipment, which has prompted the need to revise and update our Rules.

Our clothing Rules are in two basic parts; one concerned with stiffness and the other concerning thickness. In each part it is irrelevant how many layers of material are used in the construction of each panel provided that the overall stiffness and thickness regulations are complied with. The thickness of material used in the manufacture of jackets and trousers, excluding reinforcements, is restricted to a maximum of 2.5mm when measured using the approved thickness testing device. Measuring is generally performed on unfolded panels to obtain the "single" result as shown in Rule 7.5.2.1 "Clothing Thickness Standards Table". The 5.0mm limit shown for "double" is only relevant when measuring areas where it would be difficult to reach, such as inside of the

jacket arms or trouser legs, owing to the limitations of the measuring device. The new Rules will not change the existing thickness specifications.

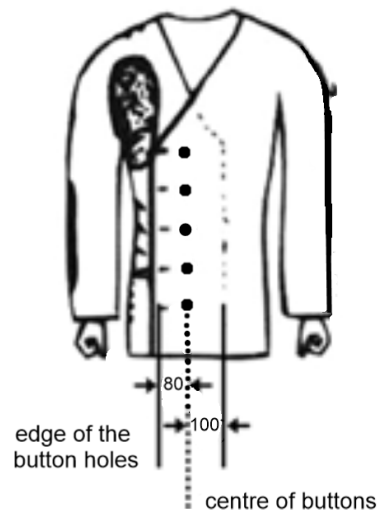
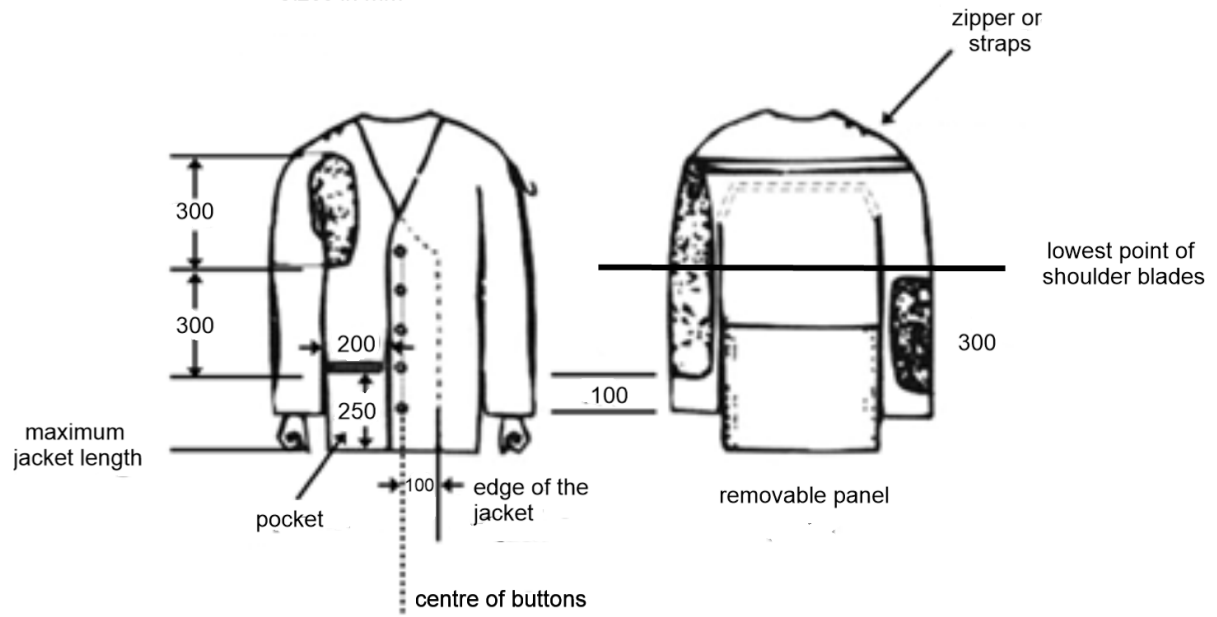
Concerning stiffness, the current Equipment Control Guide, (2018 edition), and accompanying measurement form indicates a total of thirteen areas where measurements should be made, and allows a maximum of sixty seconds for each test. Therefore, in most cases it takes a minimum of thirteen minutes, plus time to reposition the clothing for each test, resulting in an average of four athletes per hour to pass through EC, and waiting times sometimes exceeding four hours. This is unacceptable for athletes and EC Operatives during a busy championships. We were acutely aware that radical changes to the Rules concerning stiffness would affect most athletes currently using modern clothing, so the proposed Rule revisions are intended to allow athletes and coaches to modify their existing clothing by flexing and manipulation to enable it to pass the new tests. We accept that athletes' need some support to reduce the risk of strain to the upper back and shoulders and also to the lumbar region when holding the rifle 'on-aim' in the standing position, so the new rule proposals are as follows:

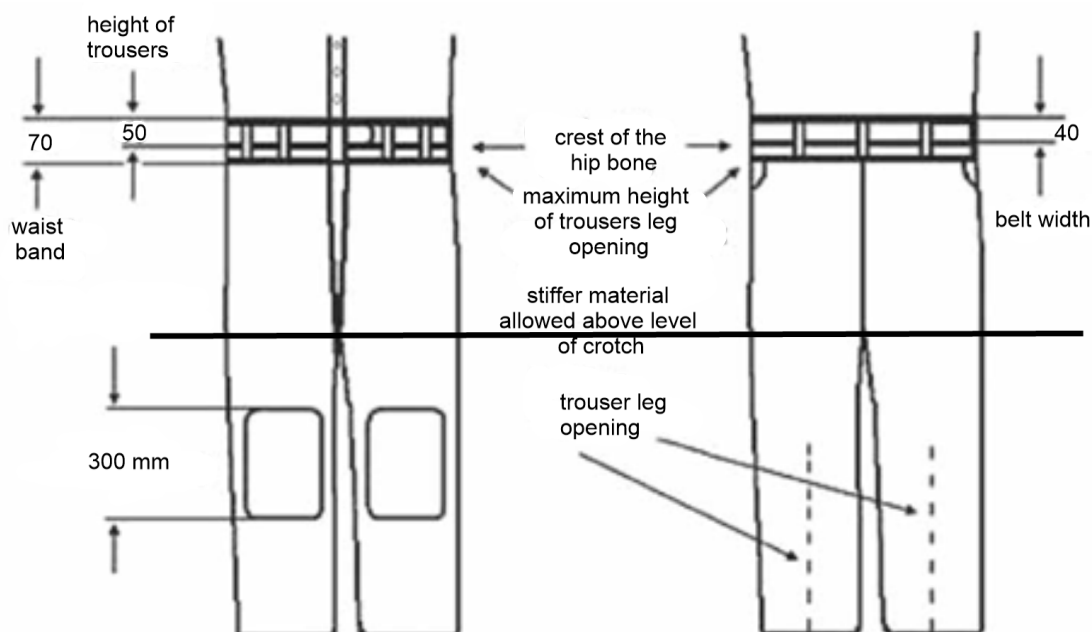
Jackets: The area above the lower part of the shoulder-blades, excluding the sleeves, will need to pass the existing 3mm deflection test in a maximum time of thirty (30) seconds. The remainder of the jacket will need to deflect 3mm in a maximum time of fifteen (15) seconds. Additionally, Rule 7.5.4.2, which requires jackets to be capable of overlapping beyond the normal closure by at least 70mm measured from the centre of the button to the outside edge of the button hole, will be increased to 80mm. This will aid in complying with the same rule that, "the jacket must hang loosely on the wearer". Buttons could be moved to achieve that but, in cases where that is not possible, advice is included to clarify what is allowable to modify a jacket by use of a cord or laces to form a loop into which the button can be fastened.

Trousers: Similar to the jackets, the area above the level of the crotch will need to deflect 3mm in a maximum time of thirty (30) seconds but the remainder of the trousers will need to deflect 3mm in a maximum time of fifteen (15) seconds.

In both cases, the measurements will be taken on a single thickness of material. The diagrams below will clarify the proposed rule revisions.

Sizes in mm





The current Rifle Equipment Control Guide (2018 edition) and the accompanying Measurement Form will be re-written to provide instructions to EC operatives where measurements should be taken.

We have considered proposals to revise the Rules concerning Rifle shooting shoes to bring them in line with those for Pistol shoes, i.e., not to extend above the ankles. However, this would require all athletes to cut the excess material from their existing shoes, which would cause much dissatisfaction and resentment. We have therefore decided to retain the current rules and see if the changes to the clothing rules achieve the desired result in terms of appearance and effect. This may be reviewed and possibly revised at a later date. Our existing rules address the required flexibility of the soles and the testing procedures, which are effective and do not require revision. If their shoe soles are too rigid, athletes can modify them by judicious cutting or drilling across the bending-point.

Submitted for information of Industry, athletes and coaches to enable preparation for the year commencing 1st January 2026.

David Goodfellow

Chairman ISSF Rifle Committee