

## Hunting and Fishing by Military Personnel and Veterans

### ***Firearms Safety Certificate Required***

As required by law, anyone born during or after 1980 must have a firearms safety certificate in order to get an annual license to take wild animals with a firearm in Minnesota. Or instead of the firearms safety certificate, a hunter can have an equivalent certificate issued by Minnesota or another state. An advanced hunter education certificate suffices as an equivalent certificate. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 97B.015](#) and [97B.020](#))

As defined in statute, wild animals include any type of wild mammal, bird, or waterfowl for which hunting is regulated under Minnesota law and/or Department of Natural Resources (DNR) rules. The terms “taking” and “firearms” are also broadly defined. ([Minn. Stat. § 97A.015](#))

### ***Active Military Exempt from Safety Certificate Requirement***

A person is exempt from having to have a firearms safety certificate if the person has completed military basic training *and* is serving in active military service in any branch or unit of the U.S. Armed Forces, including while on regular leave or terminal leave.

Following active military service, the firearm safety certificate is again required. However, anyone who has completed basic military training is exempt from the shooting and field exercise portion of the instruction for that certificate and may take the remainder of the instruction online through the DNR. ([Minn. Stat. §§ 97B.015](#) and [97B.020](#))

“Active duty” is defined broadly to include federal active service ([U.S.C. Title 10](#)), federally funded state active service ([U.S.C. Title 32](#)), or state active service ([Minn. Stat. § 190.05](#), subd. 5).

### ***License Not Needed During Military Leave***

While on any type of military leave, a Minnesota resident serving in the U.S. Armed Forces stationed outside of or returning to Minnesota may hunt and fish in Minnesota without a hunting or fishing license. The person must keep on his or her person while hunting official military leave papers and/or a current valid military ID card showing the person’s transitional status or leave. However, the resident must obtain any required seals, tags, and coupons, which must be furnished by the license agent without charge. This requirement does not apply to the taking of moose or elk. ([Minn. Stat. § 97A.465](#), subd. 1.)

### ***Soldiers and Veterans Can Get Lottery Preference***

The Commissioner of Natural Resources may grant statutorily specified groups of Minnesota resident service members and veterans, first preference in drawings for antlerless deer permits and turkey permits. ([Minn. Stat. § 97A.465](#), subd. 5)

<b><i>Discharged Service Members Can Get Deer Licenses During the Season</i></b>	A Minnesota resident who is discharged from active military service during, or within ten days before the firearms deer season begins, can purchase a firearms deer license during the season. The license is valid immediately upon issuance. (Minn. Stat. § 97A.465, subd. 4) Normally, a deer hunting license issued during the season is not valid unless it was issued prior to legal shooting hours on the day of its first use. (Minn. Stat. § 97A.411, subd. 3) In order to get the license, the hunter must show his or her official discharge papers.
<b><i>Disabled Veterans Don't Have to Pay for Certain Licenses</i></b>	A disabled veteran can get a permanent fishing license free from the DNR Central Office and free annual licenses to hunt deer and small game from any licensing agent. The veteran must be a Minnesota resident who is a military veteran with a 100-percent service-connected disability rating from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (Minn. Stat. §§ 97A.441 and 197.447)  No trout stamp is required for the fishing license. In addition, a disabled veteran does not need to get a pheasant stamp or Minnesota waterfowl stamp to hunt pheasants or waterfowl, but must have a turkey stamp to hunt turkeys and a federal duck stamp to hunt waterfowl. (Minn. Stat. §§ 97B.715, 97B.721, 97B.801, and 16 U.S.C. 718)
<b><i>Nonresident Military Can Get Resident Privileges</i></b>	Nonresident military personnel training at Camp Ripley may purchase a resident fishing license. (Minn. Stat § 97A.465, subd. 2) Nonresident military personnel stationed anywhere in Minnesota may purchase resident hunting and fishing licenses (but not for moose or elk). (Minn. Stat. § 97A.465, subd. 3)
<b><i>Free License Within Two Years of Serving Abroad</i></b>	Any current Minnesota resident who has served in federal active military service outside the United States within the past two years, as shown by official discharge papers, is eligible to receive one free deer-hunting license from any DNR licensing agent. In addition, any such person may also hunt small game or fish in Minnesota without a license, provided he or she obtains any seals, tags, or coupons that may be required for such hunting or fishing. (Minn. Stat. §97A.465, subd. 1b)
<b><i>Spouses of Residents on Active Duty Can Get Resident Licenses</i></b>	The spouse of any Minnesota resident currently serving in active military duty is entitled to any Minnesota hunting or fishing license at the resident rate, irrespective of whether the spouse is a Minnesota resident. (Minn. Stat. §97A.465, subd. 1a)
<b><i>Coding on Driver's License</i></b>	When renewing a Minnesota driver's license, a veteran or other person with a firearms safety certificate or an equivalent certificate, may request that the driver's licensing agency code that fact onto the person's new driver's license. The person must show proof of certification to the licensing agency upon application. (Minn. Stat. § 171.07, subd. 13)
<b><i>Getting a License</i></b>	To learn more about these special privileges, active military personnel and veterans should contact the DNR via its website, <a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us">www.dnr.state.mn.us</a> , or by phone, 651-296-6753. Information and licenses can also be obtained through DNR's local field licensing agents (e.g., sporting goods stores).

**For more information:** Contact legislative analyst Jeff Diebel at 651-296-5041.

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