

Title 39 Criminal Offenses  
Chapter 17 Offenses Against Public Health, Safety and Welfare  
Part 13 Weapons

Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-17-1309 (2016)

**39-17-1309. Carrying weapons on school property.**

**(a)** As used in this section, "weapon of like kind" includes razors and razor blades, except those used solely for personal shaving, and any sharp pointed or edged instrument, except unaltered nail files and clips and tools used solely for preparation of food, instruction and maintenance.

**(b) (1)** It is an offense for any person to possess or carry, whether openly or concealed, with the intent to go armed, any firearm, explosive, explosive weapon, bowie knife, hawk bill knife, ice pick, dagger, slingshot, leaded cane, switchblade knife, blackjack, knuckles or any other weapon of like kind, not used solely for instructional or school-sanctioned ceremonial purposes, in any public or private school building or bus, on any public or private school campus, grounds, recreation area, athletic field or any other property owned, operated, or while in use by any board of education, school, college or university board of trustees, regents or directors for the administration of any public or private educational institution.

**(2)** A violation of this subsection (b) is a Class E felony.

**(c) (1) (A)** It is an offense for any person to possess or carry, whether openly or concealed, any firearm, not used solely for instructional or school-sanctioned ceremonial purposes, in any public or private school building or bus, on any public or private school campus, grounds, recreation area, athletic field or any other property owned, operated, or while in use by any board of education, school, college or university board of trustees, regents or directors for the administration of any public or private educational institution.

**(B)** It is not an offense under this subsection (c) for a nonstudent adult to possess a firearm, if the firearm is contained within a private vehicle operated by the adult and is not handled by the adult, or by any other person acting with the expressed or implied consent of the adult, while the vehicle is on school property.

**(2)** A violation of this subsection (c) is a Class B misdemeanor.

**(d) (1)** Each chief administrator of a public or private school shall display in prominent locations about the school a sign, at least six inches (6") high and fourteen inches (14") wide, stating:

FELONY. STATE LAW PRESCRIBES A MAXIMUM PENALTY OF SIX (6) YEARS IMPRISONMENT  
AND A FINE NOT TO EXCEED THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$3,000) FOR CARRYING WEAPONS  
ON SCHOOL PROPERTY.

**(2)** As used in this subsection (d), "prominent locations about a school" includes, but is not limited to, sports arenas, gymnasiums, stadiums and cafeterias.

**(e)** Subsections (b) and (c) do not apply to the following persons:

**(1)** Persons employed in the army, air force, navy, coast guard or marine service of the United States or any member of the Tennessee national guard when in discharge of their official duties and acting under orders requiring them to carry arms or weapons;

**(2)** Civil officers of the United States in the discharge of their official duties;

**(3)** Officers and soldiers of the militia and the national guard when called into actual service;

**(4)** Officers of the state, or of any county, city or town, charged with the enforcement of the laws of the state, when in the discharge of their official duties;

**(5)** Any pupils who are members of the reserve officers training corps or pupils enrolled in a course of instruction or members of a club or team, and who are required to carry arms or weapons in the discharge of their official class or team duties;

**(6)** Any private police employed by the administration or board of trustees of any public or private institution of higher education in the discharge of their duties;

**(7)** Any registered security guard/officer who meets the requirements of title 62, chapter 35, and who is discharging the officer's official duties;

**(8) (A)** Persons possessing a handgun, who are authorized to carry the handgun pursuant to § 39-17-1351, while within or on a public park, natural area, historic park, nature trail, campground, forest, greenway, waterway, or other similar public place;

**(B)** Subdivision (e)(8)(A) shall not apply if the permit holder:

**(i)** Possessed a handgun on property described in subdivision (e)(8)(A) that is owned or operated by a board of education, school, college, or university board of trustees, regents, or directors unless the permit holder's possession is otherwise excepted by this subsection (e); or

**(ii)** Possessed a handgun in the immediate vicinity of property that was, at the time of possession, in use by any board of education, school, college or university board of trustees, regents, or directors for the administration of any public or private educational institution for the purpose of conducting an athletic event or other school-related activity on an athletic field, permanent or temporary, including but not limited to, a football or soccer field, tennis court, basketball court, track, running trail, Frisbee field, or any similar multi-use field; and

**(iii)** Knew or should have known that:

**(a)** An athletic event or school-related activity described in subdivision (e)(8)(B)(ii) was taking place on the property at the time of the possession; or

**(b)** The property on which the possession occurred was owned or operated by a school entity described in subdivision (e)(8)(B)(ii); or

**(iv)** Failed to take reasonable steps to leave the area of the athletic field or school-related activity or the property after being informed or becoming aware of:

**(a)** Its use for athletic or school-related purposes; or

**(b)** That it was, at the time of the possession, owned or operated by a school entity described in (e)(8)(B)(ii);

**(9)** Persons permitted to carry a handgun on the property of private K-12 schools by § 49-50-803, and persons permitted to carry a handgun on the property of private for-profit or nonprofit institutions of higher education pursuant to § 49-7-161; provided, that this subdivision (e)(9) shall apply only:

**(A)** To the school or institution where the person is located, when that school or institution has adopted a handgun carry policy pursuant to § 49-50-803 or § 49-7-161;

**(B)** While the person is on the property or grounds covered by the private school or institution's policy; and

**(C)** When the person is otherwise in compliance with the policy adopted by the private school or institution;

**(10)** Persons carrying a handgun pursuant to § 49-6-815 or § 49-6-816; provided, that this subdivision (e)(10) shall apply only within and on the grounds of the school for which the person is authorized;

**(11) (A)** Employees authorized to carry a handgun pursuant to § 39-17-1351 on property owned, operated, or controlled by the public institution of higher education at which the employee is employed;

**(B) (i)** Any authorized employee who elects to carry a handgun pursuant to this subdivision (e)(11) shall provide written notification to the law enforcement agency or agencies with jurisdiction over the property owned, operated, or controlled by the public institution of higher education that employs the employee;

**(ii)** The employee's name and any other information that might identify the employee as a person who has elected to carry a handgun pursuant to this subdivision (e)(11) shall be confidential, not open for public inspection, and shall not be disclosed by any law enforcement agency with which an employee registers; except that the employee's name and other information may be disclosed to an administrative officer of the institution who is responsible for school facility security; provided, however, that the administrative officer is not the employee's immediate supervisor or a supervisor responsible for evaluation of the employee. An administrative officer to whom such information is disclosed shall not disclose the information to another person. Identifying information about the employee collected pursuant to this subdivision (e)(11) shall not be disclosed to any person or entity other than another law enforcement agency and only for law enforcement purposes; and

**(iii)** Law enforcement agencies are authorized to develop and implement:

**(a)** Policies and procedures designed to implement the notification and confidentiality requirements of this subdivision (e)(11)(B); and

**(b)** A voluntary course or courses of special or supplemental firearm training to be offered to the employees electing to carry a handgun pursuant to this subdivision (e)(11). Firearm safety shall be a component of any firearm course;

**(C)** Unless carrying a handgun is a requirement of the employee's job description, the carrying of a handgun pursuant to this subdivision (e)(11) is a personal choice of the employee and not a requirement of the employer. Consequently, an employee who carries a handgun on property owned, operated, or controlled by the public institution of higher education at which the employee is employed is not:

**(i)** Acting in the course of or scope of their employment when carrying or using the handgun;

**(ii)** Entitled to workers' compensation benefits under § 9-8-307(a)(1)(K) for injuries arising from the carrying or use of a handgun;

**(iii)** Immune from personal liability with respect to use or carrying of a handgun under § 9-8-307(h);

**(iv)** Permitted to carry a handgun openly, or in any other manner in which the handgun is visible to ordinary observation; or

**(v)** Permitted to carry a handgun at the following times and at the following locations:

**(a)** Stadiums, gymnasiums, and auditoriums when school-sponsored events are in progress;

**(b)** In meetings regarding disciplinary matters;

**(c)** In meetings regarding tenure issues;

**(d)** A hospital, or an office where medical or mental health services are the primary services provided; and

**(e)** Any location where a provision of state or federal law, except the posting provisions of § 39-17-1359, prohibits the carrying of a handgun on that property;

**(D)** Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, a public institution of higher education shall be absolutely immune from claims for monetary damages arising solely from or related to an employee's use of, or failure to use, a handgun; provided the employee is employed by the institution against whom the claim is filed and the employee elects to carry the handgun pursuant to this subdivision (e)(11). Nothing in this section shall expand the existing conditions under which sovereign immunity is waived pursuant to § 9-8-307; and

**(E)** As used in subdivisions (e)(11)-(13):

**(i)** "Employee" includes all faculty, staff, and other persons who are employed on a full-time basis by a public institution of higher education; and

**(ii)** "Employee" does not include a person who is enrolled as a student at a public institution of higher education, regardless of whether the person is also an employee;

**(12) (A)** Any employee of the University of Tennessee institute of agriculture or a college or department of agriculture at a campus in the University of Tennessee system when in the discharge of the employee's official duties and with prior authorization from the chancellor of the University of Tennessee institute of agriculture; or

**(B)** Any employee of the University of Tennessee institute of agriculture or a college or department of agriculture at a campus in the University of Tennessee system, and any member of the employee's household, living in a residence owned, used, or operated by the University of Tennessee, if the employee has prior authorization from the chancellor of the University of Tennessee institute of agriculture and the employee and household members are permitted to possess firearms in their residence under Tennessee and federal law; and

**(13) (A)** Any employee of the university's college or department of agriculture when in the discharge of the employee's official duties and with prior authorization from the president of a university in the board of regents system;

**(B)** Any employee of the university's college or department of agriculture, and any member of the employee's household, living in a residence owned, used, or operated by the university, if the employee has prior authorization from the president of a university in the board of regents system and the employee and household members are permitted to possess firearms in their residence under Tennessee and federal law; or

(C) Any employee, with prior authorization of the president of a university in the board of regents system, who is engaged in wildlife biology or ecology research and education for the purpose of capture or collection of specimens.

**HISTORY:** Acts 1989, ch. 591, § 1; 1990, ch. 1029, § 8; 1991, ch. 510, §§ 1-3; 1996, ch. 1009, § 24; 2015, ch. 250, §§ 3, 4; 2016, ch. 698, § 3; 2016, ch. 1049, § 2; 2016, ch. 1061, § 1.