



FACT SHEET

Microstamping

What is Microstamping?

Microstamping is a patented process that laser engraves the firearm's make, model and serial number on the tip of the gun's firing pin so that, in theory, it imprints the information on discharged cartridge cases.

What is the Problem with Microstamping?

A recent independent, peer-reviewed, study published in the professional scholarly journal for forensic firearms examiners proved that the technology of microstamping is unreliable and does not function as the patent holder claims. It can be easily defeated in mere seconds using common household tools or criminals could simply switch the engraved firing pin for readily available unmarked spare parts, thereby circumventing the technology.

Experts at the University of California, Davis, recently finished a study of the technology which was requested and funded by the California State Legislature. The conclusions about the technology are straightforward and direct. The researchers found this patented technology "flawed" and concluded that "At the current time it is not recommended that a mandate for implementation of this technology in all semiautomatic handguns in the state of California be made. Further testing, analysis and evaluation is required."

NSSF and other groups, including major law enforcement organizations, are opposed to this unproven and unreliable technology. The cost of this dubious technology is a great concern to firearms owners and taxpayers alike. Microstamping legislation in California would not only have forced consumers of firearms to pay exorbitant price increases — as much as \$200 per firearm — to cover the increased cost of microstamping, but substantially higher taxes for the cost of microstamped law enforcement guns.

Legislative Threats

Microstamping legislation is a threat at both the federal and state level. U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) and U.S. Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.) have proposed drafting a federal bill to mandate the flawed technology, and, in California, microstamping legislation passed out of the state Senate and Assembly and was signed into law by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in October 2007. It is set to take effect in January 2010.

Independent Studies Conclude Microstamping Should Not Be Mandated

To date, three comprehensive studies have been done on firearms microstamping: [Professor George Krivosta](#), for the professional scholarly journal for forensic firearms examiners; The University of California at Davis; and most recently the [National Academy of Sciences](#). All three of these independent studies concluded that the patented, sole-sourced technology of firearms microstamping is easily defeated by criminals, flawed, unreliable and must be studied further before any legislature even considers mandating the technology.

"Further studies are needed on the durability of microstamping marks under various firing conditions and their susceptibility to tampering, as well as on the their cost impact for manufacturers and consumers."

-- [National Academy of Science Study](#)

"Implementing this technology will be much more complicated than burning a serial number on a few parts and dropping them into firearms being manufactured."

-- [Professor George Krivosta](#), The professional scholarly journal for forensic firearms examiners

"At the current time it is not recommended that a mandate for implementation of this technology be made. Further testing, analysis and evaluation is required."

-- [University of California at Davis](#) on Firearms Microstamping

Federal Study on Microstamping Introduced (July 2010)

[U.S. Congressman Dan Boren introduced legislation](#) (H.R. 5667) to direct the U.S. Attorney General to work with the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a comprehensive study of firearm microstamping. NSSF supports this bipartisan legislation as a means of ensuring that adequate research of microstamping is completed, and the concept is proven to work reliably, prior to states mandating microstamping through the legislative process.

The Patent Holder's Dream -- Our Nightmare

"Once it's implemented, further research would be warranted."

-- Todd Lizotte, New Haven Register, March 18, 2008

Resources

To learn more about microstamping technology and specific threats in California, please visit the following links:

[NSSF Backgrounder on Microstamping and Cost](#)

[NSSF Backgrounder on Microstamping and Crime](#)

[NSSF Backgrounder on U.C. Davis Study](#)

[NSSF Backgrounder on Professor Krivosta Study](#)