

Firearm Precursor Part Identification Guidebook

As mandated by Penal Code section 16531, subdivision (b).



California Department of Justice
Division of Law Enforcement
Bureau of Firearms

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Introduction and Background

On June 30, 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill (“AB”) 1621 (Stats. 2022, ch. 76), an urgency statute with provisions that took effect immediately, except where the bill specified another implementation date. Some of the provisions that took immediate effect revised the definition of “firearm precursor part” (Pen. Code, § 16531, subd. (a)), added a definition for a “federally regulated firearm precursor part” (Pen. Code, § 16519), and generally prohibited the purchase, sale, offer to sell, or transfer of a firearm precursor part that is not a federally regulated firearm precursor part in the state of California, except as specified (Pen. Code, § 30400, subd. (a)).

On April 11, 2022, the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (“ATF”) issued Final Rule 2021R-05F, Definition of “Frame or Receiver” and Identification of Firearms (hereinafter referred to as the “ATF Final Rule”). The ATF Final Rule, which takes effect on August 24, 2022, makes federal regulatory changes that are relevant to the definition of a federally regulated firearm precursor part. For the full text of the ATF Final Rule, visit:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/04/26/2022-08026/definition-of-frame-or-receiver-and-identification-of-firearms>.

Penal Code section 16531, subdivision (b) requires the Department of Justice (“Department”) to issue “written guidance and pictorial diagrams demonstrating examples of firearm precursor parts.” In accordance with this mandate, and to ensure the consistency between California and federal law, the Department has revised the Firearm Precursor Part Identification Guidebook (“Guidebook”).

The purpose of this Guidebook is to define key terms and include pictorial diagrams that will help individuals, manufacturers, dealers, and law enforcement agencies to properly identify a firearm precursor part and a federally regulated firearm precursor part, as those terms are defined under California law.

Written Guidance and Key Definitions

In accordance with Penal Code section 16531, subdivision (b), the Department has determined that the following definitions are useful “written guidance” for the identification of firearm precursor parts and are consistent with the provisions of AB 1621. An individual or entity should use the below terms and definitions in conjunction with the diagrams on pages 3 through 6 to help properly identify a firearm precursor part and a federally regulated firearm precursor part.

Term	Definition
Federally Regulated Firearm Precursor Part	<p>“Federally regulated firearm precursor part” means any firearm precursor part deemed to be a firearm pursuant to Chapter 44 (commencing with Section 921) of Title 18 of the United States Code and regulations issued pursuant thereto, and, if required, has been imprinted with a serial number by a federal licensee authorized to serialize firearms in compliance with all applicable federal laws and regulations. (Pen. Code, § 16519.)</p> <p>As of August 24, 2022, the "regulations issued pursuant thereto" are sections 478.11 and 478.12 of Title 27 of the Code of Federal Regulations (August 2022), hereby incorporated by reference. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 11, § 4303, subd. (a)(1).)</p>
Firearm Precursor Part	<p>“Firearm precursor part” means any forging, casting, printing, extrusion, machined body or similar article:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="342 1707 1463 1770">(1) that has reached a stage in manufacture where it may readily be completed, assembled or converted to be used as the frame or receiver of a functional firearm; or<li data-bbox="342 1801 1463 1864">(2) that is marketed or sold to the public to become or be used as the frame or receiver of a functional firearm once completed, assembled or converted. <p>“Firearm precursor part” does not include firearm parts that can only be used on antique firearms, as defined in Penal Code section 16170, subdivision (c). (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 11, § 4303, subd. (a)(2); Pen. Code, § 16531, subs. (a), (c).)</p>

Term	Definition
Frame	<p>“Frame” means the part of a handgun, or variants thereof, that provides housing or a structure for the primary energized component designed to hold back the hammer, striker, bolt, or similar component prior to initiation of the firing sequence (i.e., sear or equivalent), even if pins or other attachments are required to connect such component to the housing or structure.</p> <p>For a split or multiple part frame design, “frame” instead means the part of a handgun, or variants thereof, that has been designated as the frame by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives in subdivision (f)(1) of section 478.12 of Title 27 of the Code of Federal Regulations (August 2022), hereby incorporated by reference. One example includes the Ruger Mark IV pistol, in which the frame is the upper part of the weapon that provides housing for the bolt or breechblock. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 11, § 4303, subd. (a)(3); 27 C.F.R. § 478.12(a)(1), (a)(4), (f)(1) (August 2022).)</p>
Firearm	<p>“Firearm” means a device, designed to be used as a weapon, from which is expelled through a barrel, a projectile by the force of an explosion or other form of combustion. (Pen. Code, § 16520, subd. (a).)</p>
Handgun	<p>“Handgun” means any pistol, revolver, or firearm capable of being concealed upon the person. (Pen. Code, § 16640)</p>
Machining	<p>“Machining” means the process of cutting, drilling, shaping, indexing, milling, or removing material from a forging, casting, printing, extrusion, or similar article using a tool or equipment. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 11, § 4303, subd. (a)(4); 27 C.F.R. § 478.12 (August 2022).)</p>
Readily	<p>“Readily” means a process, action, or physical state that is fairly or reasonably efficient, quick, and easy, but not necessarily the most efficient, speediest, or easiest process, action, or physical state. With respect to the classification of firearm precursor parts, factors relevant in making this determination include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Time, i.e., how long it takes to finish the process; (b) Ease, i.e., how difficult it is to do so; (c) Expertise, i.e., what knowledge and skills are required; (d) Equipment, i.e., what tools are required; (e) Parts availability, i.e., whether additional parts are required, and how easily they can be obtained; (f) Expense, i.e., how much it costs; (g) Scope, i.e., the extent to which the subject of the process must be changed to finish it; and (h) Feasibility, i.e., whether the process would damage or destroy the subject of the process, or cause it to malfunction. <p>In determining whether a forging, casting, printing, extrusion, machined body, or similar article has reached a stage in manufacture where it may readily be completed, assembled, or converted to be used as the frame or receiver of a functional firearm, the Department may consider any available instructions, guides, templates, jigs, equipment, tools, or marketing materials. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 11, § 4303, subd. (a)(5).)</p>

Term	Definition
Receiver	<p>“Receiver” means the part of a rifle, shotgun, or projectile weapon other than a handgun, or variants thereof, that provides housing or a structure for the primary component designed to block or seal the breech prior to initiation of the firing sequence (i.e., bolt, breechblock, or equivalent), even if pins or other attachments are required to connect such component to the housing or structure.</p> <p>For a split or multiple part receiver design, “receiver” instead means the part of a rifle, shotgun, or projectile weapon other than a handgun, or variants thereof, that has been designated as the receiver by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives in subdivision (f)(1) of section 478.12 of Title 27 of the Code of Federal Regulations (August 2022), hereby incorporated by reference. Some examples include the following: (1) for AR-15/M16 variant firearms, the receiver is the lower part of the weapon that provides housing for the trigger mechanism and hammer (i.e. lower receiver); (2) for a Benelli 121 M1 Shotgun, the receiver is the lower part of the weapon that provides housing for the trigger mechanism; and (3) for Vickers/Maxim, Browning 1919, M2, and box-type machineguns and semiautomatic variants, the receiver is the side plate of the weapon that is designed to hold the charging handle. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 11, § 4303, subd. (a)(6); 27 C.F.R. § 478.12(a)(2), (a)(4), (f)(1) (August 2022).)</p>
Rifle	<p>“Rifle” means a weapon designed or redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder and designed or redesigned and made or remade to use the energy of the explosive in a fixed cartridge to fire only a single projectile through a rifled bore for each single pull of the trigger. (Pen. Code, § 17090)</p>
Shotgun	<p>“Shotgun” means a weapon designed or redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder and designed or redesigned and made or remade to use the energy of the explosive in a fixed shotgun shell to fire through a smooth bore either a number of projectiles (ball shot) or a single projectile for each pull of the trigger. (Pen. Code, § 17190)</p>
“Variant” And “Variants Thereof”	<p>“Variant” and “variants thereof” mean a weapon utilizing a similar frame or receiver design irrespective of new or different model designations or configurations, characteristics, features, components, accessories, or attachments. For example, an AK-type firearm with a short stock and a pistol grip is a pistol variant of an AK-type rifle, an AR-type firearm with a short stock and a pistol grip is a pistol variant of an AR-type rifle, and a revolving cylinder shotgun is a shotgun variant of a revolver. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 11, § 4303, subd. (a)(7); 27 C.F.R. § 478.12(a)(3) (2022).)</p>

Pictorial Diagrams: Examples of Firearm Precursor Parts and Federally Regulated Firearm Precursor Parts

These pictorial diagrams serve as a visual reference for the identification of firearm precursor parts and federally regulated firearm precursor parts. An item or article may be a firearm precursor part in California even though it may not be a federally regulated firearm precursor part.

Please note that these pictorial diagrams demonstrate examples of some of the most commonly manufactured firearm precursor parts and federally regulated firearm precursor parts. (Pen. Code, § 16531, subd. (b).) However, they do not represent all makes, models, or configurations of firearm precursor parts or federally regulated firearm precursor parts.

If there is not a pictorial diagram of a specific item below, and a question remains as to whether an item would be classified as a firearm precursor part or a federally regulated firearm precursor part, then a person may submit a request to the Department under the requirements of Penal Code section 30401 (for a firearm precursor part determination), or to the ATF under the requirements of Code of Federal Regulations, title 27, section 478.92(c) (for a federally regulated firearm precursor part determination).

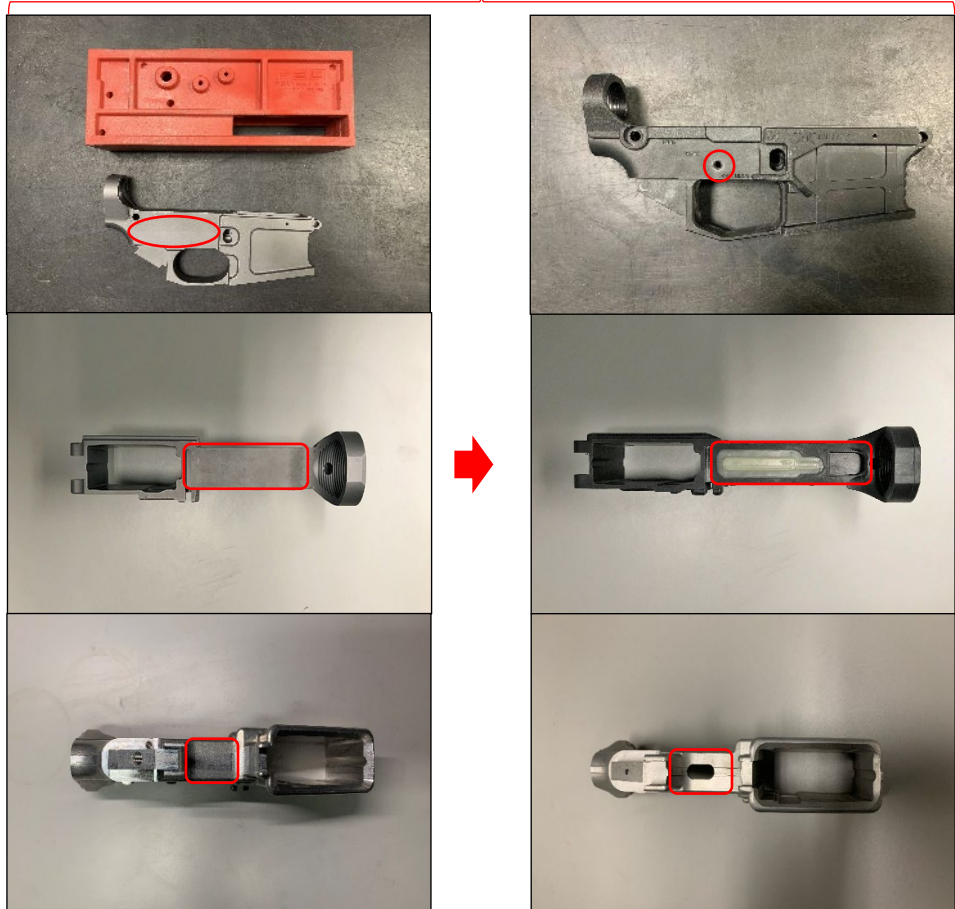
Armalite (AR-15) Style Billet or Blank

Firearm Precursor Part
(Pen. Code, § 16531, subd. (a))



The articles or items in each of the above four images would be a firearm precursor part if the article or item is marketed or sold to the public to become or be used as the receiver of a functional firearm once completed, assembled or converted. (Pen. Code, § 16531, subd. (a).)

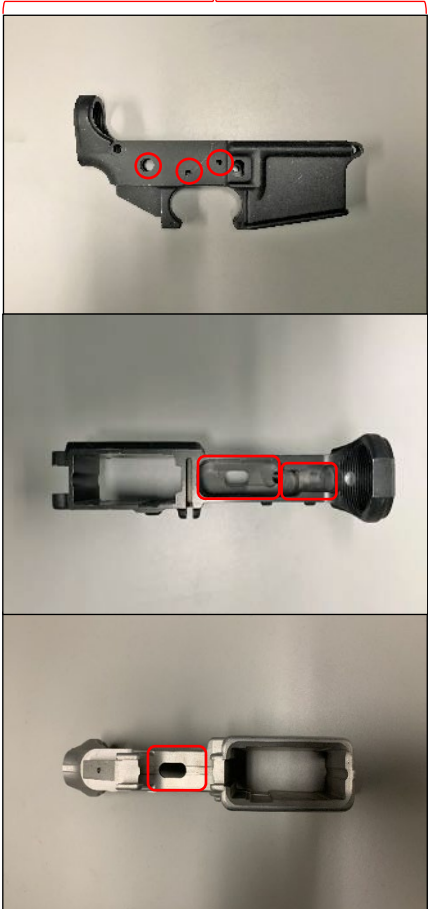
Federally Regulated Firearm Precursor Part
(Pen. Code, § 16519)



The machining that would be necessary to give the above three Armalite (AR-15) style billets or blanks a safety selector lever hole, hammer pin hole, trigger pin hole, trigger slot, or fire control cavity has not been initiated.

However, if the billets or blanks shown in any of the above three images are sold, distributed, or possessed with a compatible jig (as shown in the first image above) or template, then the billet or blank is a federally regulated firearm precursor part because a person with online instructions and common hand tools may readily complete or assemble the billet or blank to function as a receiver. (27 C.F.R. § 478.12(c), *Example 1* (August 2022).)

Receiver
(Pen. Code, § 16520, subd. (b))



The machining necessary to give the above three Armalite (AR-15) style billets or blanks a safety selector lever hole, hammer pin hole, trigger pin hole, trigger slot, and fire control cavity has been completed.

The articles or items in each of the above three images are receivers, and thus firearms. (Pen. Code, § 16520, subd. (b).)

The machining necessary to give the above three Armalite (AR-15) style billets or blanks a safety selector lever hole, hammer pin hole, trigger pin hole, trigger slot, or fire control cavity has been initiated.

A partially complete billet or blank of a receiver with one or more template holes drilled or indexed in the correct location is a federally regulated firearm precursor part, as a person with common hand tools may readily complete the billet or blank to function as a receiver. (27 C.F.R. § 478.12(c), *Example 2* (August 2022).)

Glock Style Blank

Firearm Precursor Part
(Pen. Code, § 16531, subd. (a))



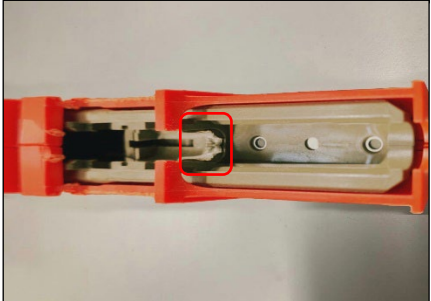
The articles or items in each of the above two images would be a firearm precursor part if the article or item is marketed or sold to the public to become or be used as the frame of a functional firearm once completed, assembled or converted. (Pen. Code, § 16531, subd. (a).)

Federally Regulated Firearm Precursor Part
(Pen. Code, § 16519)



The machining that would be necessary to give the above three Glock style blanks a trigger housing pin hole, trigger pin hole, locking block pin hole, or barrel seat has not been initiated.

However, if the blanks shown in any of the above three images are sold, distributed, or possessed with a compatible jig (as shown in the first image above) or template, then the blank is a federally regulated firearm precursor part because a person with online instructions and common hand tools may readily complete or assemble the blank to function as a frame. (27 C.F.R. § 478.12(c), *Example 1* (2022).)



The machining necessary to give the above two Glock style blanks a trigger housing pin hole, trigger pin hole, locking block pin hole, or barrel seat has been initiated.

A partially complete blank of a frame with one or more template holes drilled or indexed in the correct location is a federally regulated firearm precursor part, as a person with common hand tools may readily complete the blank to function as a frame. (27 C.F.R. § 478.12(c), *Example 2* (2022).)

Frame
(Pen. Code, § 16520, subd. (b))

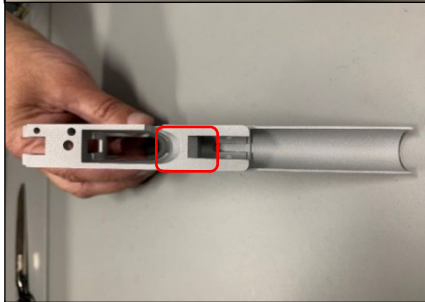


The machining necessary to give the above two Glock style blanks a trigger housing pin hole, trigger pin hole, locking block pin hole, and barrel seat has been completed.

The articles or items in each of the above two images are frames, and thus firearms. (Pen. Code, § 16520, subd. (b).)

1911 Style Billet or Blank

Firearm Precursor Part
(Pen. Code, § 16531, subd. (a))



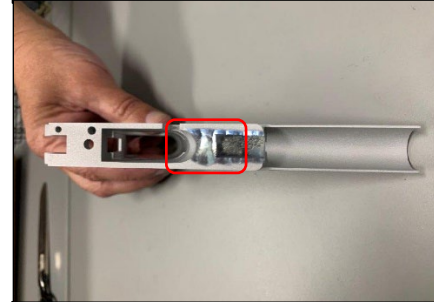
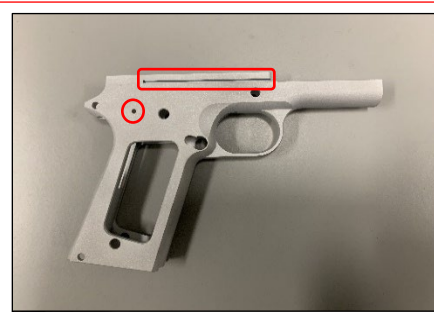
The articles or items in each of the above two images would be a firearm precursor part if the article or item is marketed or sold to the public to become or be used as the frame of a functional firearm once completed, assembled or converted. (Pen. Code, § 16531, subd. (a).)

Federally Regulated Firearm Precursor Part
(Pen. Code, § 16519)



The machining that would be necessary to give the above three 1911 style billets or blanks a hammer pivot pin hole, sear pivot pin hole, slide rails, or barrel seat has not been initiated.

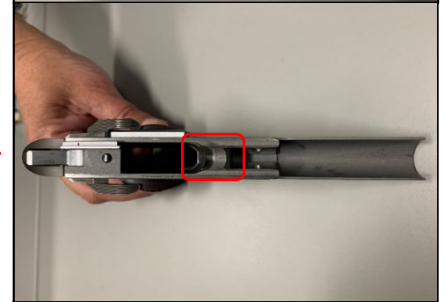
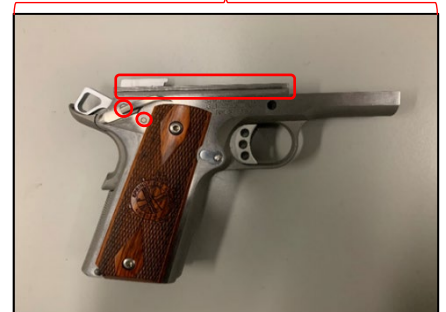
However, if the billets or blanks shown in any of the above three images are sold, distributed, or possessed with a compatible jig (as shown in the first image above) or template, then the billet or blank is a federally regulated firearm precursor part because a person with online instructions and common hand tools may readily complete or assemble the billet or blank to function as a frame. (27 C.F.R. § 478.12(c), *Example 1* (2022).)



The machining necessary to give the above two 1911 style billets or blanks a hammer pivot pin hole, sear pivot pin hole, slide rails, or barrel seat has been initiated.

A partially complete billet or blank of a frame with one or more template holes drilled or indexed in the correct location is a federally regulated firearm precursor part, as a person with common hand tools may readily complete the billet or blank to function as a frame. (27 C.F.R. § 478.12(c), *Example 2* (2022).)

Frame
(Pen. Code, § 16520, subd. (b))



The machining necessary to give the above two 1911 style billets or blanks a hammer pivot pin hole, sear pivot pin hole, slide rails and barrel seat has been completed.

The articles or items in each of the above two images are frames, and thus firearms. (Pen. Code, § 16520, subd. (b).)