

Legal Requirements for Self-made Firearms



Attorney General Xavier Becerra reminds Californians that state and federal laws govern the possession, manufacture, and sale of firearms, including those produced through 3D printing. The California Department of Justice (DOJ) provides the following information on the law and regulations concerning self-manufactured firearms.

Information on Laws and Regulations concerning self-manufactured firearms

1. Eligibility to possess a firearm:

You must be eligible to own or possess a firearm in California to manufacture or assemble your own firearm. Among other groups, individuals convicted of certain crimes, individuals subject to domestic violence restraining orders, and individuals found to be a danger to themselves or others are prohibited from owning or possessing firearms. A full list of groups that may not own or possess firearms under state and federal law is available [here](#).

2. Self-made firearms must be legal weapons:

If you intend to manufacture or assemble your own firearm—including through the use of 3D printing—you must ensure that the firearm is legal to possess or manufacture in California. California law prohibits individuals from manufacturing or assembling certain classes of firearms, including assault weapons and machine guns.

Additionally, California law generally prohibits the manufacture of unsafe handguns. A self-manufactured handgun must meet certain design features under state law. A self-manufactured semiautomatic handgun, even if temporarily altered for single-shot firing, must include safety and security features, including:

- The firearm must incorporate a manually-operated safety device.
- The firearm must meet California's drop safety requirements.
- The firearm must be able to imprint certain identifying information on two locations on each cartridge case when fired.

Some exceptions apply to these rules. For full details and definitions of unsafe handguns and required features under California law, see [Penal Code Sections 31900-32100](#).

3. Serial numbers are required for self-made firearms:

California law also requires individuals who possess, manufacture, or assemble firearms in the state to apply to the DOJ for a unique serial number for each self-made firearm.

- Any person who possesses a self-manufactured or self-assembled firearm that does not bear a serial number must apply to the DOJ for a unique serial number by January 1, 2019.

- Any person intending to manufacture or assemble a firearm after July 1, 2018, must first apply to the DOJ for a unique serial number.

If you are eligible and the firearm you intend to make meets the legal requirements, you may apply for a unique serial number by visiting <https://oag.ca.gov/firearms/usna>.

Once you receive your unique serial number, it must be permanently placed on the firearm. According to DOJ regulations, firearms created through 3D printing using polymer plastic must bear their unique serial numbers on an embedded piece of stainless steel.

A firearm manufactured or assembled from polymer plastic on or after July 1, 2018, shall contain its unique serial number on 3.7 ounces of material type 17-4 PH stainless steel. This stainless steel piece shall be embedded within the plastic receiver or frame upon the firearm's manufacture or assembly. California Code of Regulations, Title 11, Division 5, Chapter 41, § 5519.

After permanently placing the serial number on the firearm, you must upload photographs through the DOJ's website.

4. Selling self-made firearms is illegal:

With limited exceptions, the sale or transfer of ownership of self-manufactured or self-assembled firearms is prohibited under California law.

Further References:

- [Full list of categories of people](#) for whom it is illegal to own or possess firearms under state and/or federal law.
- Firearms that cannot be manufactured or assembled by an individual include:
 - Any weapon prohibited under [Penal Code Section 16590](#)
 - An assault weapon as defined in [Penal Code Section 30510 or 30515](#)
 - A machine gun as defined in [Penal Code Section 16880](#)
 - A .50 BMG rifle as defined in [Penal Code Section 30530](#)
 - A destructive device as defined in [Penal Code Section 16460](#)
- California law on unsafe handguns:
 - [California Penal Code Sections 31900-31910](#) contains definitions and requirements for handguns and their components.
 - [California Penal Code Section 32000](#) generally prohibits manufacturing unsafe handguns.
 - [California Penal Code Section 32100](#) contains certain exceptions to the prohibition of manufacturing unsafe handguns.
- [California Penal Code Sections 29180-29184](#) contains the law on serial number requirements and sales restrictions for self-made firearms.
- [California Code of Regulations Title 11, Division 5, Chapter 14](#) contains the full regulations concerning unique serial numbers for self-made firearms.

This alert is for informational purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice or as policy of the State of California. If you want advice on a particular case, you should consult an attorney or other expert.