



TACTICAL U AFTERMATH CHECKLIST

Self-Defense Shooting Aftermath Checklist

Hot zone, cold zone, 911, first police contact, and the first 72 hours after a defensive firearm incident.

Educational only. Not legal advice. Laws, policies, and procedures vary by state and by fact pattern. Talk with a qualified attorney about your situation.

The Four Core Firearm Safety Rules

1. Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.

The safety system starts before the incident ever exists.

2. Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.

Control where the gun points before you think about anything else.

3. Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on target and you have decided to fire.

A startled hand should not create a life-changing event.

4. Be sure of your target and what is beyond it.

You own every round you fire and every consequence that follows.

**The best aftermath is the one you never have. This checklist helps if it happens.
Training helps you make the right call before the emergency exists.**

First Question: Are You Still In The Hot Zone?

☐ **Hot zone means danger is still active.**

The attacker may still have access to you, there may be more attackers, you may be exposed to traffic or crowds, or you may be standing where officers will see a gun before they understand the incident.

☐ **Cold zone means immediate danger is lower.**

You have cover, distance, visibility, and enough control to stop, breathe, call 911, render aid if safe, and prepare for police contact.

☐ **Do not freeze in the original fight location if it is still unsafe.**

Moving to safety can protect you and others. The downside is that leaving too far, too fast, or without calling can look like flight. Your reason for moving must be safety, not escape.

☐ **Do not rush into a second problem.**

Trying to secure the entire scene may expose you to the attacker, bystanders, traffic, mistaken identity, or arriving officers. Your first job is safety, not playing police.

Stay, Move, Or Leave

☐ **Stay if staying is reasonably safe.**

Pros: you can identify yourself as the reporting person, point out evidence and witnesses, and avoid looking like you fled. Cons: you may remain exposed, emotional, armed, or too close to the threat.

☐ **Move if movement makes you safer.**

Pros: cover, distance, and better visibility can save your life. Cons: movement can be misread unless you call 911, explain your location, and make yourself identifiable.

☐ **Leave only when staying would be dangerous.**

Examples: crowd forming, attacker still mobile, family exposed, fire, vehicle danger, or a location you cannot safely hold. Consequence: leaving without immediately reporting can create serious legal and credibility problems.

☐ **Call as soon as you safely can.**

If you must move, tell dispatch where you are, why you moved, what you look like, and that you are the person who called for help.

Can You Secure The Scene Safely?

☐ **Secure yourself before you secure objects.**

Holster if safe. If holstering is unsafe, place the firearm down only when it does not create a new threat. Do not stand over a gun when officers arrive.

☐ **Do not handle evidence unless safety requires it.**

Moving weapons, shell casings, phones, bags, or clothing can damage the investigation. The exception is immediate safety, such as moving a weapon away from an attacker who can still reach it.

☐ **Protect witnesses without controlling them.**

If someone is leaving, ask them to stay or get their name and number if safe. Do not block, threaten, argue, or create a new confrontation.

☐ **Render aid only if it is safe and you are capable.**

Pros: it may save life and show good faith. Cons: it may expose you to danger, contaminate evidence, or create more confusion if the threat is not controlled.

Call 911: What To Say And What Not To Say

☐ **Say there was an attack and help is needed.**

Ask for police and medical response. Give the exact location, your description, injuries, and any immediate danger.

☐ **Do not give the whole story on dispatch audio.**

Dispatch calls are recorded. Give safety facts, not a long legal explanation. Do not speculate, boast, apologize, or narrate every shot.

☐ **Describe yourself clearly.**

Tell dispatch what you are wearing and where you will be. If you moved, say why: I moved to safety and I am at this location.

☐ **Stay on the line if it helps safety.**

Follow reasonable dispatch instructions, but do not let a recorded call become a detailed interrogation while you are flooded with adrenaline.

When Police Arrive

☐ **Expect commands first, questions later.**

Officers may not know who the victim is. Keep hands visible, move slowly, comply, and do not argue about being disarmed or handcuffed.

☐ **Use a short statement.**

Say: I was attacked. I defended myself. I will cooperate fully after I speak with my attorney.

☐ **Point out what can disappear.**

Attacker, injuries, weapons, shell casings, cameras, witnesses, vehicles, and anything moved or hidden by others.

☐ **Stop before the detailed interview.**

Adrenaline changes memory, time, and sequence. Ask for counsel before a full recorded statement.

The First 24-72 Hours

☐ **Lawyer first.**

Speak with a criminal-defense attorney familiar with self-defense before detailed statements or interviews.

☐ **Get medical attention.**

Shock, hearing damage, impact injuries, and stress symptoms may show later. Get checked and document it.

☐ **Do not post.**

No social media, no group texts, no news comments, no victory story, and no explaining yourself online.

☐ **Preserve your private timeline for counsel.**

When your attorney tells you to, write what you remember. Separate facts you know from things you think happened.

The Second Fight

☐ **The incident is not over when the weapon is secure.**

The second fight is legal, civil, social, digital, financial, and emotional.

☐ **Every action has a consequence.**

Staying may expose you. Leaving may look like flight. Speaking may lock in errors. Silence without basic safety facts may lose evidence. This is why training must include judgment, communication, and aftermath.

☐ **Prepare before it happens.**

Open-carry laws tell you where a firearm may be carried. Training teaches judgment, restraint, communication, and what to do when the pressure is real.

☐ **Train to avoid the aftermath.**

This checklist helps if it happens. Training is how you keep it from happening.

Train the Prevention Side

Online safety classes.

For responsible gun owners anywhere in the country. Work the judgment, aftermath, safety, and decision-making side before pressure shows up.

Concealed Handgun Tactics & Safety.

For armed citizens who want deeper in-person work with Stephen Cohen in South Florida.

Books from Stephen Cohen.

The Second Fight and *Tactical Social Defense* go deeper into the legal, social, digital, and personal aftermath this checklist only starts.

Start at tacticalu.com/online-courses or book a call at calendly.com/tacticalu/tacticalu.

Stephen L. Cohen is the founder and lead instructor of Tactical U, with 32+ years in law enforcement at a senior operational level, including SWAT, federal task force work, and dignitary protection. He is an NRA Law Enforcement certified firearms instructor.