

Notes From the Lab: 9mm Luger

The 9mm Luger (aka 9mm Parabellum and 9x19) is widely popular around the world for military, law enforcement, personal defense and sporting applications. It is often loaded to different pressure levels in military arms; however, in the U.S. the standard operating pressure is 35,000 psi.

Many of the “start” loads in the accompanying data would barely cycle the action of the “Government” sized Kimber Stainless Target II Model 1911, often failing to push the slide back far enough to engage the slide stop. Many of these loads were cross-referenced in a variety of pistols from around the world, which often gave similar results. Thus it is not suggested to reduce start loads. None of the maximum loads exceed industry pressure limits and should be safe in all guns in good mechanical condition.

Considerable variances have been observed in 9mm brass, especially surplus cases from unknown parts of the world, which are often not suitable for maximum loads listed here. The loads herein were developed in Starline cases, but should also be suitable in all commercial U.S. manufacture cases.

Since the 9mm headspaces on the case mouth, a taper crimp is required, which should be applied after the bullet is seated to the correct depth. Considering its small powder capacity and the fast to medium burn rate powders usually used with this cartridge, correct bullet seating depth is crucial. Seat bullets to the exact listed Cartridge Over All Length (COAL). A bullet seated just .040 inch deeper (about the thickness of 10 sheets of paper) than listed can jump substantially in chamber pressures, while seating the bullet .10 inch deeper can push pressures over 60,000 psi, which is clearly a dangerous situation.