Vihtavuori Smokeless Loads for Cowboy Action Shooting

About the Data

These loads are developed to give the velocities required for the cowboy action shooting using revolvers with lead bullets. The maximum load is determined by the velocity limit about 300 m/s, or by the maximum pressure limit according to the CIP October 1, 1992 rules. The bold text in the tables indicate the maximum load according to CIP pressure level. The maximum loads must never be exceeded.

All the listed loads are intended to be used in modern firearms, which are according to the SAAMI requirements. Please use a competent gunsmith to evaluate that the condition of your gun is adequate to be used with the pressures indicated in the tables. The starting loads are the lowest charges which appeared to give clean burning, i.e. no unburned residues in the barrel or in the case, in our test shooting. This limit may, however vary according to the revolver used.

There are some special features, which must be considered, when using reduced loads like the ones presented in the tables below. The same facts are equally valid always when using any smokeless powder in such loads.

1) Double charges

Some of these loads are so small that throwing the load twice in the same case is possible because of the large case volume. Doubling the charge accidentally causes most probably truly lethal chamber pressures. Therefore, it is a must for everyone using this data to check visually every single load for the double charge before seating the bullet.

2) Free space in the case

When using charges which leave large amount of free space in the case, the shooting characteristics may vary largely depending on where the powder is located in the case. If the powder lies totally in the bottom of the case (i.e. in the end where primer is), the muzzle velocity and especially the maximum pressure become much higher. The maximum pressure may even be doubled when same powder charge is moved from the bullet end to the primer end of the case. This can simply be demonstrated by shaking the revolver barrel upwards or barrel downwards just before turning it smoothly in horizontal position, aiming and shooting. Also the recoil may transfer the powder in either end of the case. This is sometimes seen as a velocity change between the first shot and the following shots.

The shot to shot deviations in velocity and pressure are normally increased when using load which leaves the cases half empty. For this reason such loads are not recommended for target loads. The data below is tested in a way that the powder is as much as possible in the primer side before firing, and therefore, the pressures and the velocities represent the maximum values which were obtained using our test equipment and cartridge components indicated in the table.

3) Risk for underload detonation

This risk is always present when using highly reduced loads of any smokeless powder. The large free space in the case may generate a pressure wave which can cause, in the worst case, powder to burn as a shock wave, i.e. to detonate, instead of normal fast burning process. The extremely sharp pressure peaks involved in detonation can destroy the weapon and may lead to serious injury.

All these loads given here are extensively pressure tested and no signs of underload detonation were found. We strongly recommend everyone to follow strictly these tables to minimize the risk for underload detonation.

Warnings

Smokeless powder differs considerably in its burning characteristics from common "black powder". Black powder burns essentially at the same rate in the open (unconfined) as when in a gun. The burning rate of smokeless powder increases with increasing pressure. If burning smokeless powder is confined, gas pressure will rise and eventually can cause the container or chamber to burst. A slight increase in smokeless powder charge after maximum load causes sharp increase in maximum pressure in the chamber. **Never exceed the maximum loads.**

.38 Special

Test barrel: 125 mm (5"), 1 in 18" twist
Primers: Small Pistol
Cases: Remington, trim-to length 29,10 mm (1.146")

Bullet						Powder	Starting load				Maximum load			
Weight		Type/Name	Mfg	C.O.L.		Type	Weight		Velocity		Weight		Velocity	
[g]	[grs]			[mm]	[in.]		[g]	[grs]	[m/s]	[fps]	**[g]**	**[grs]**	**[m/s]**	**[fps]**
9,4	145	LSWC		37,5	1.476	N32C	0,32	4.9	307	1007	0,37	5.7	314	1030
10,2	158	FNCM	Gunhill	36,7	1.445	N32C	0,27	4.2	261	856	0,36	5.6	306	1004
10,3	158	LSWC/HP		36,5	1.437	N320	0,21	3.3	230	755	0,25	3.8	256	840
						N330	0,23	3.6	240	787	0,27	4.1	269	883

.357 Magnum

Test barrel: 150 mm (6"), 1 in 18½" twist
Primers: Small Rifle
Cases: Remington, trim-to length 32,60 mm (1.283")

Bullet						Powder	Starting load				Maximum load			
Weight		Type/Name	Mfg	C.O.L.		Type	Weight		Velocity		Weight		Velocity	
[g]	[grs]			[mm]	[in.]		[g]	[grs]	[m/s]	[fps]	**[g]**	**[grs]**	**[m/s]**	**[fps]**
10,2	158	FNCM	Gunhill	40,2	1.583	N32C	0,29	4.5	265	869	0,37	5.7	309	1014
10,3	158	LSWC/HP		40,0	1.575	N330	0,25	3.9	241	791	0,32	5.0	304	997
						N340	0,29	4.5	245	804	0,38	5.9	320	1050

.44 S&W Special

Test barrel: 165 mm (6½"), 1 in 18" twist
Primers: Large Pistol
Cases: Remington, trim-to length 29,30 mm (1.153")

Bullet						Powder	Starting load				Maximum load			
Weight		Type/Name	Mfg	C.O.L.		Type	Weight		Velocity		Weight		Velocity	
[g]	[grs]			[mm]	[in.]		[g]	[grs]	[m/s]	[fps]	**[g]**	**[grs]**	**[m/s]**	**[fps]**
15,6	240	SWC/HP		39,1	1.539	N320	0,30	4.7	214	702	0,38	5.9	260	853
						N330	0,36	5.5	229	751	0,41	6.3	270	886
16,1	248	LRNFP	Gunhill	37,2	1.465	N32C	0,38	5.9	238	781	0,41	6.3	255	837
17,3	267	LFN		39,1	1.539	N320	0,25	3.8	193	633	0,34	5.3	242	794
						N330	0,32	4.9	216	709	0,38	5.9	254	833
						N340	0,43	6.6	261	856	0,47	7.3	282	925

.44 Remington Magnum

Test barrel: 175 mm (7"), 1 in 20" twist
Primers: Large Pistol
Cases: Remington, trim-to length 32,40 mm (1.276")

Bullet						Powder	Starting load				Maximum load			
Weight		Type	Mfg	C.O.L.		Type	Weight		Velocity		Weight		Velocity	
[g]	[grs]			[mm]	[in.]		[g]	[grs]	[m/s]	[fps]	**[g]**	**[grs]**	**[m/s]**	**[fps]**
16,1	248	LRNFP	Gunhill	40,5	1.594	N32C	0,49	7.6	272	892	0,62	9.6	309	1014
17,3	267	LFN		40,0	1.575	N340	0,38	5.9	224	735	0,49	7.5	288	945
17,3	267	LSWC		40,5	1.681	N32C	0,50	7.7	271	889	0,60	9.3	301	988

LIGHT GREY TEXT BOX INDICATES MAXIMUM LOAD - USE WITH CAUTION!
LOADS LESS THAN MINIMUM CHARGES SHOWN ARE NOT RECOMMENDED