

## **Hitting the Mark on Firearms Training**

By [Marshall Dury](#), Internet Reporter

**related materials:**

**6/9/2003**

The safety of both inmates and staff inside correctional facilities can sometimes depend on the use of a gun by a correctional officer, which means firearms training is essential. Thanks to revolutionary technology, a company named Beamhit is providing correctional departments and other law enforcement agencies in the United States with a practical mixture of technology and firearm security when teaching marksmanship.

'Almost every organization in the United States has people who need remedial instruction in skills like sight management and trigger instruction,' said **Sherman McGill**, National Sales Director for Beamhit. 'This type of system isn't about simply having better trained officers ... it's about increased job efficiency, security and comfort.'

Beamhit, established in 1997, focused its energy on how correctional officers are trained with firearms, which is required in most states. The Beamhit system is considered by many to be a premier tool for training people to use firearms. A new firearm user can use a basic model, while the U.S. Army uses Beamhit's sniper training system to simulate live fire exercises, with the ability to control wind speed, humidity and ground topography.

### **Inside the Beamhit System**

A Beamhit system consists of an attachable firearm laser that clips onto a correction officer's empty firearm or slides into the firearm's chamber. Two forms of lasers are available, depending on the varying skill level of the user: internal lasers that cannot be seen or external lasers, which display a red laser that can be used to fine-tune marksmanship skills. Beamhit systems also require corresponding targets, which have a variety of sizes, prices and filters for target-silhouettes.

'With both a target and a laser, your average [correctional recruit or officer] can be given the skills to virtually eliminate any failure on a Beamhit or live firing range,' said McGill. 'You can't teach a physical skill through a cognitive process and this system lets the teacher and students see exactly where someone is shooting and how to correct the mistakes.'

Beamhit can be crucial in recording an officer's training progress - keeping a permanent record of target hits and misses. If used with the corresponding computer software, Beamhit can record both the time and date of each firing session - allowing correctional facilities to keep a hard copy of each security officer's firearm training/retraining.

The 700 Pro1 System is one of Beamhit's most basic units, which includes the

battery operated target system and external laser for any trainee's gun. The 700 Pro1 System is easy to add on to, creating the possibility for multiple targets in a timed firearms run through any situation, said McGill.



The 700 Pro1 System is one of Beamhit's most popular and less expensive units, giving the consumer a laser, a target and target-filters. (Photo Courtesy: Beamhit LLC)

'You have a visible way of showing one or 30 students how to hit the target - dead center,' said **Samuel D. Faulkner**, law enforcement training specialist for the Ohio Attorney General's office. 'An officer can take their own weapon, shoot it themselves and even use human targets all the while gaining the knowledge and experience that a live fire marksmanship class can't always teach.'

Faulkner remembers his experiences with one male officer and one female officer who had never fired a gun before attending the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction's (DRC) Training Academy. Faulkner found the two students quickly learned basic firearm skills using Beamhit, creating a foundation for better marksmanship skills and a better chance for re-qualification once they became correctional officers.

'In 20 minutes, a student can be consistently hitting the target. They may not be ready for the stress of recoil or the sound of a gun firing, but they're well on their way,' said Faulkner.

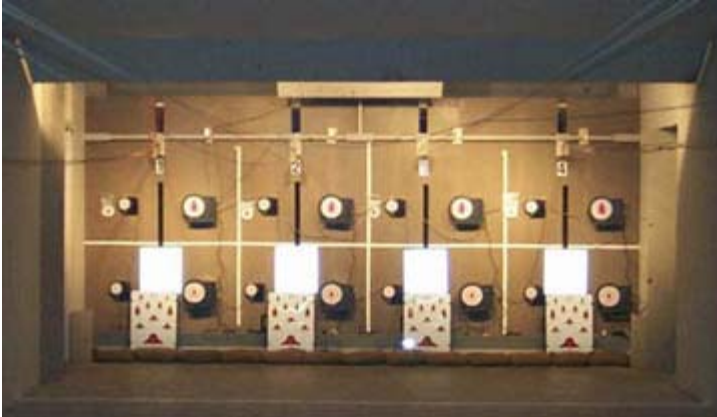
### **Beamhit in the Field**

Ohio's DRC has been using Beamhit since its conception roughly seven years ago. Using both stand-alone units and systems that can be attached to moving people, the training academy uses several model 110 training systems with new students from day one.

'We can set up a full indoor range or bring the teaching session into a classroom with a [small group]. The great thing about these systems is that they are only limited by your imagination,' said Faulkner. 'I've done training sessions with moving targets, hostage situations or even something as detailed as transferring an inmate from one area to another - it's one of the best tools out there for this type of training.'

With over 20 units that cost nearly \$199 each, Faulkner has found the \$4,000 price

tag to quickly pay itself off through savings in ammunition and transportation costs for the average trip to an outdoor firing range. The units are not only used for firearm re-certification. However, they can be used with new students, in-service officer training and providing special team units with a greater versatility in how training scenarios can be done.



**This live-fire indoor range was turned into a 'Beamhit Indoor Range,' for military officers wishing to practice their accuracy on all size and different shape targets. (Photo Courtesy: Beamhit LLC)**

**John Ely**, security specialist for the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), has found Beamhit to reduce remedial firearms training while shortening the learning curve for new correctional officers. While Ely notes the benefits of Beamhit systems, he is quick to point out that this technology is beneficial as an aid and should not be an agency's only means of firearms training.

'[Beamhit] does fine in the classroom and that's not to say that it should take the place of live-fire exercises,' said Ely. 'It's a system that is best used in tandem with live-fire, rather than replacing it.'

The only shortcomings of Beamhit systems, in Faulkner's opinion, are the lack of live-stress factors that come with shooting a gun, such as the shock of gun recoil or the smell of gunpowder. With a Master's in exercise physiology, Faulkner thinks that firearms training with stress factors is just as important as learning the basics of marksmanship.

'You have to learn the skill of shooting a gun first: sight alignment, sight picture, trigger press, bang, recoil,' said Faulkner. 'It's best to create muscle memory for the most important safety measures before you add the sound of a gun firing, the feeling of recoil, the smell of gun powder and the sound of a shell hitting the ground.'

### **Adding Flexibility to Firearms Training**

A cross-comparison between Beamhit and live-fire training best illustrates the system's strengths. Lower ammunition costs, lowered firearm qualification failure rates and increased safety concurrent with learning on a non-lethal firearm are just a few of what Beamhit believes to be their assets when compared to a day spent at the firing range.

McGill has found the system's versatility to allow correctional firearms training programs into an instructional arena that can train anyone from a new correctional

officer to the more demanding and experienced emergency response teams.

'If someone is on their post in a tower or if they're trying to shoot through glass in an exercise, [Beamhit] lets you actually setup a training area for that scenario,' said McGill. 'Since you're not using live ammunition, whatever training conditions the person or organization buying the unit wants to operate under is their prerogative.'



This 'Session In Progress Screen' illustrates the targeting-capture system of Beamhit's corresponding software that can record a shooter's missed shots, hit shots and timing. (Photo Courtesy: Beamhit LLC)

Shooter liability is the last, but certainly not least, issue of importance that McGill says correctional facilities can improve upon. In the instance that an officer is forced to use a firearm, the actions of the officer are closely followed and reported. Beamhit allows any correctional facility to permanently record an officer's firearm training record and firing accuracy reports, assuring other security officers, the media and citizens that the discharge of a weapon was skilled - raising officer and correctional facility accountability.

'Teaching can be more interactive and students will be more interested in improving if the system actually improves their accuracy,' said Ely. 'There is a direct relationship between how an officer does with Beamhit and how well they shoot their firearm.'

According to McGill, the Army Research Institute has proven that there is a one-to-one correlation between how well someone can shoot with Beamhit and how well someone will shoot at a live firing range. This leaves any shooter or correctional officer with more confidence in knowing that a Beamhit system can be used as a teaching substitute for live ammunition.

'This unit is the only way to go for the initial and continued training of correctional officers. But, like anything else, it won't do the work for you unless you use it,' said Faulkner. 'If it's used day after day by everyone in the corrections field, it will surely save any institution both time and money, [as well as] increased safety and increased shooter confidence.'

## Resources

Sherman McGill, National Sales Director for Beamhit, (901)-837-2643, [smcgill@beamhit.com](mailto:smcgill@beamhit.com).

To look at product information for Beamhit, go to: <http://www.beamhit.com/>.

Samuel D. Faulkner, Law Enforcement Specialist for the Ohio Attorney's General Office, (614) 466-7771, [Sfaulkner@ag.state.oh.us](mailto:Sfaulkner@ag.state.oh.us).

John Ely, Security Specialist for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, [Jely@bop.gov](mailto:Jely@bop.gov).