

Shot Firer interview questions

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What to expect

Shot firer interviews are practical and safety weighted. Employers are checking that you understand the licensing framework you work under, that your loading and firing habits are disciplined, and that you would make sound calls if a pattern did not go to plan.

- **Process and sequence:** Questions that ask you to talk through a full shotfiring sequence, from receiving the blast plan to declaring the area clear, to see whether your routine is systematic.
- **Technical and fault-finding:** Questions about loading to design, hole conditions, circuit testing and what you do when a hole or a pattern behaves differently from the plan.
- **Safety and compliance:** Questions on licences, explosives storage, exclusion zones, misfire procedure and the regulator requirements you work under day to day.
- **Behavioural:** Tell me about a time questions on stopping work, raising a concern, handling a near miss or working through a disagreement on a crew.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Hypotheticals built around misfires, wet holes, weather delays or a pattern that fires short, testing how you think under pressure.
- **Roster and site fit:** Straightforward questions about remote work, night shift, rotating rosters and living in camp, since the job is built around them.

Most sites run a phone or video screen first, covering your licence, tickets, roster availability and right to work. That is followed by a site based or panel interview with a drill and blast engineer or supervisor, usually covering the sequence question, one or two technical or scenario questions, and a safety question. Medical, police check and explosives security clearance steps sit after the interview rather than inside it.

1. Walk me through your shotfiring sequence, from when you receive the blast plan to when you hand the area back.

Why they ask

This is the core of the role. The interviewer wants to see a repeatable routine, with nothing skipped under time pressure.

How to structure your answer

A plain walk-through in order, with the checkpoints named at each stage. Keep it chronological and finish on the confirmation that the area is clear and the records are done.

Example answer

"I start with the plan, checking the design against the marked pattern in the field and confirming hole depths and spacing before anything comes out of the magazine. I sign the explosives out, log the quantities, and move them to the bench with the shotfiring vehicle. Then it is loading and priming hole by hole, stemming to design, and I sample and check any hole that looks wet or underfilled rather than guessing. I connect the detonators, run a continuity check on the circuit and confirm every hole reads before I stand the crew down. Once the blast guard is in place and the exclusion zone is confirmed on the radio, I fire. After the shot I wait for clearance, inspect the muckpile and the face, clear any misfire under procedure, and hand the area back with the usage log and blast record completed."

2. How do you confirm a hole is loaded and stemmed to design, and what do you do when a hole is not holding what the plan expects?

Why they ask

Loading faults lead directly to poor fragmentation, overbreak and misfires. Interviewers use this to separate people who follow the plan from people who notice when the ground does not match it.

How to structure your answer

Explain your verification method first, then the escalation path. Show that you stop and assess rather than pushing product into a hole that is already compromised.

Example answer

"I measure as I go rather than trusting the plan alone. I check the hole depth against the design, confirm the primer is seated where it should be, and check the stemming column looks right. If a hole is short, wet, or taking more or less product than the plan says, I flag it to the supervisor before loading further and note it on the pattern. Depending on what it is, the blast engineer may adjust the charge weight, the hole may be re-drilled, or it may be left out of the firing sequence altogether. I would rather lose one hole from a pattern than have a misfire or a flyrock event to deal with afterwards."

3. Tell me about a time you stopped a job or raised a safety concern during loading.

Why they ask

It tests whether you will actually use your authority to stop work, not just say you would.

How to structure your answer

STAR: the situation and what you noticed, the task and your responsibility, the action you took and who you told, then the result and what changed afterwards.

Example answer

"We were loading a pattern on a wet bench and I noticed the product was bridging in one of the holes rather than dropping to the primer. The crew was behind schedule and pushing to keep going. I called a stop on the loading and got the supervisor across. We pulled the charge back out of that hole, and it turned out there was a collapsed section about halfway down that had not shown up on the drill log. The hole was re-drilled and loaded the next day. The supervisor added a check for wet and broken ground to the pre-load briefing after that, and I now sample any hole that sounds or feels different before I load it."

4. You fire a pattern and one hole does not initiate. What do you do in the first few minutes?

Why they ask

Misfires are the highest consequence event in the job. The interviewer wants your instinct to be the procedure, not a quick fix.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: immediate actions first, then notification, then resolution. Make the order clear and do not skip the waiting period.

Example answer

"First thing is that nobody goes anywhere near the face. I keep the exclusion zone in place, hold the crew back and confirm over the radio that everyone has acknowledged. I note the position of the hole and the time of firing, because the waiting period starts from the shot and it matters. Then I notify the supervisor and the blast engineer and we work out the cause, whether it is a wiring fault, a cut-off or a detonator that did not fire. Once the waiting period is up and it is safe to approach, I inspect the hole under procedure, and re-fire or re-treat it only with the supervisor's authorisation. After that I write it up so the site has a record of what happened and why."

5. What does holding a shotfirer licence mean in practice, day to day?

Why they ask

Licensing sits under everything else in this role. This checks you understand the obligations, not just that you have the card.

How to structure your answer

A compliance focused answer: the licence conditions first, then how they show up in your daily habits and record keeping.

Example answer

"It means I am accountable for how explosives are stored, handled, used and accounted for on site. In practice that is signing product in and out of the magazine, keeping the usage log accurate, working to the blast management plan and the site procedures rather than my own shortcuts, and reporting anything that does not match up. It also means staying current, because the licence and the security clearance requirements for handling Security Sensitive Ammonium Nitrate both need to be maintained. If a procedure changes or a design changes, I work to the new version and ask if something is unclear, because the paperwork has to reflect what actually happened on the bench."

6. This is a remote, roster based job with night shift. How do you manage that?

Why they ask

Employers want to know you will front up consistently and that you understand what you are signing up for.

How to structure your answer

A straightforward, honest answer about your routine, your sleep habits and how you handle being away from home. No need to overstate it.

Example answer

"I have worked rosters for a while now, so I know what my body needs. I keep the same sleep pattern on site as much as I can, eat properly, and stay off the phone late before a night shift. I treat the swing as a work period rather than trying to fit everything in around it, and I use my break to actually recover. I also make sure I am on time for pre-starts and briefings, because in this job the crew cannot start without everyone who is meant to be on the pattern."