

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY**Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms****27 CFR Parts 178 and 179**

[T.D. ATF-415; Ref: Notice No. 857; 93F-057P]

RIN 1512-AB67

Implementation of Public Law 103-159, Relating to the Permanent Provisions of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act**AGENCY:** Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), Department of the Treasury.**ACTION:** Final rule, Treasury decision.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) is amending the regulations to implement the provisions of Public Law 103-159, relating to the permanent provisions of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act. These regulations implement the law by requiring, with some exceptions, a licensed firearms importer, manufacturer, or dealer to contact the national instant criminal background check system (NICS) before transferring any firearm to an unlicensed individual. NICS will advise the licensee whether the system contains any information that the prospective purchaser is prohibited by law from possessing or receiving a firearm.

DATES: This rule is effective November 30, 1998.**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** James P. Ficaretta, Regulations Division, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, 650 Massachusetts Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20226 (202-927-8230).**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****Background**

On November 30, 1993, Public Law 103-159 (107 Stat. 1536) was enacted, amending the Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA), as amended (18 U.S.C. Chapter 44). Title I of Public Law 103-159, the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (the "Brady law" or "Brady"), imposed as an interim measure a waiting period of 5 days before a licensed importer, manufacturer, or dealer may sell, deliver, or transfer a handgun to an unlicensed individual. The waiting period applies only in States without an acceptable alternate system of conducting background checks on handgun purchasers. The interim provisions of the Brady law, 18 U.S.C. 922(s), became effective on February 28, 1994, and cease to apply on November 30, 1998.

Permanent Provisions of the Brady Law

The permanent provisions of the Brady law provide for the establishment of a national instant criminal background check system ("NICS") that a firearms licensee must contact before transferring any firearm to an unlicensed individual. The law requires that the permanent system be established not later than November 30, 1998. While the interim provisions apply only to handguns, the permanent provisions of the Brady law apply to all firearms. Furthermore, the law provides that the system may take up to three business days to notify the licensee whether receipt of a firearm by the prospective purchaser would be in violation of law.

National Instant Criminal Background Check System

The Brady law requires that the Attorney General establish a permanent national instant criminal background check system that any licensee may contact, by telephone or by other electronic means in addition to the telephone, for information on whether receipt of a firearm by a prospective transferee would violate Federal or State law. The law requires that the permanent system be established not later than November 30, 1998. It is expected that the NICS will be established by October 31, 1998, although licensees will not be required to contact NICS until November 30, 1998.

Upon establishment of the system, the Attorney General is required to notify each firearms licensee and the chief law enforcement officer of each State of the existence and purpose of NICS and the means to be used to contact NICS. Beginning on the date that is 30 days after the Attorney General notifies firearms licensees that NICS is established, the permanent provisions of Brady, 18 U.S.C. 922(t), become effective.

Statutory Requirements

Section 922(t) generally makes it unlawful for any licensed firearms importer, manufacturer, or dealer to sell, deliver, or transfer a firearm to an unlicensed individual (transferee), unless—

1. Before the completion of the transfer, the licensee contacts the national instant background check system;
2. The system provides the licensee with a unique identification number signifying that transfer of the firearm would not be in violation of law OR 3 business days (meaning a day on which

State offices are open) have elapsed from the date the licensee contacted the system and the system has not notified the licensee that receipt of the firearm by the transferee would be in violation of law; and

3. The licensee verifies the identity of the transferee by examining a valid identification document containing a photograph of the transferee.

Exceptions to NICS

The statute provides the following exceptions to the national instant background check system:

1. The transferee presents to the licensee a permit which was issued not more than 5 years earlier by the State in which the transfer is to take place and which allows the transferee to possess or acquire a firearm, and the law of the State provides that such a permit is to be issued only after an authorized government official has verified that available information does not indicate that possession of a firearm by the transferee would be in violation of the law;

2. Purchases of firearms which are subject to the National Firearms Act and which have been approved for transfer under 27 CFR Part 179 (Machine Guns, Destructive Devices, and Certain Other Firearms); or

3. Purchases of firearms for which the Secretary has certified that compliance with NICS is impracticable because the ratio of the number of law enforcement officers of the State in which the transfer is to occur to the number of square miles of land area of the State does not exceed 0.0025 (i.e., 25 officers per 10,000 square miles), the premises of the licensee are remote in relation to the chief law enforcement officer of the area, and there is an absence of telecommunications facilities in the geographical area in which the business premises are located.

Penalties for Noncompliance

Section 922(t) provides that a firearms licensee who transfers a firearm and knowingly fails to comply with the requirements of the law, in a case where compliance would have revealed that the transfer was unlawful, is subject to license suspension or revocation and a civil fine of not more than \$5,000.

Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

On February 19, 1998, ATF published in the **Federal Register** a notice proposing regulations to implement the requirements placed on Federal firearms licensees by section 922(t) (Notice No. 857; 63 FR 8379). The comment period for Notice No. 857 closed on May 20, 1998.

On June 4, 1998, pursuant to section 103(h) of the Brady law, the Department of Justice issued proposed regulations establishing the methods of operation for NICS, including policies and procedures for ensuring the privacy and security of the system and appeal procedures for individuals who are determined by NICS to be ineligible to purchase a firearm (63 FR 30429, 30430, and 30514). Accordingly, these issues were not addressed in ATF's proposed regulations.

Prior to the close of the comment period, two commenters requested that public hearings be held on the proposed regulations and one commenter requested that the comment period be extended. ATF believes that it is necessary to advise Federal firearms licensees of their responsibilities under the permanent provisions of the Brady law as much in advance of the November 30, 1998, effective date as possible. An extension of the comment period and the holding of public hearings would delay the issuance of final regulations. Furthermore, ATF believes that 90 days is a sufficient amount of time for all interested parties to respond to the issues raised in the notice. Finally, ATF believes that any information received during an extension of the comment period or presented in oral testimony at a public hearing would be similar to that received during the 90-day comment period. Accordingly, ATF is not extending the comment period or holding public hearings on the proposed regulations.

Analysis of Comments

In response to Notice No. 857, ATF received 8,492 comments, representing 8,779 signatures. Comments were submitted by Federal firearms licensees, licensed firearms collectors, nonlicensed individuals, industry trade groups, and other organizations (e.g., National Association of Arms Shows, Inc., National Pawnbrokers Association, Violence Policy Center, Gun Owners of America, and the National Rifle Association of America), members of Congress, State representatives, and law enforcement officials.

Approximately 125 commenters addressed issues which were outside the scope of the notice. These include user fees for NICS checks, hours of operation that NICS will be available for background checks, how firearms licensees will receive final notification from NICS in the event a background check is delayed, provisions for a toll-free appeal hotline that firearms purchasers can contact in the event of a wrongful denial of a purchase, and

ATF's assurance that in most cases a NICS check will be instantaneous. These issues are being addressed in the Department of Justice's rulemaking proceeding.

Twenty-three commenters expressed opposition to the Brady law and urged its repeal. One hundred sixty-six commenters requested other changes that would also require legislative action. These include eliminating the provision of the law which authorizes NICS to take up to three business days to respond to a request for a background check, restricting the Department of Justice's role in implementing any provisions of the Brady law, exempting State "instant check" and "point of sale check" systems from a NICS check, and prohibiting NICS from containing information on certain categories of persons prohibited from receiving or possessing firearms (such as renunciates and persons discharged from the military under dishonorable conditions). ATF is not adopting any of these comments because they are inconsistent with the language of the statute.

Long Guns, Antique Firearms, and Licensed Collectors of Curios or Relics

Forty-seven commenters contend that the permanent provisions of the Brady law either do not apply or should not apply to transfers of long guns. Some commenters point out that the title of the statute, the "Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act," clearly shows that Congress intended the law, both the temporary and permanent provisions, to apply only to handguns. Other commenters argue that since the interim provisions of the Brady law apply only to handguns, it is apparent that the permanent provisions should apply only to handguns as well. These commenters maintain that ATF has exceeded its authority under the Brady law by proposing to require NICS checks for all firearms, including rifles and shotguns.

While the title of the statute is the "Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act," the plain language of the law clearly states that the permanent provisions apply to all firearms, including rifles and shotguns. In that regard, section 922(t)(1) provides that a Federal firearms licensee "shall not transfer a firearm" to an unlicensed individual unless before the completion of the transfer, the licensee contacts NICS. Section 103(j)(2) of the Brady law provides that the term "firearm" has the meaning prescribed in § 921(a) of the GCA. This section defines "firearm," in part, as "any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to

or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; . . ." Thus, the term "firearm" clearly includes rifles and shotguns.

Two commenters inquired whether antique firearms are subject to the permanent provisions of the Brady law. Pursuant to section 921(a)(3), the term "firearm" does not include an antique firearm (as defined in section 921(a)(16)). Accordingly, the transfer of an antique firearm is not subject to the Brady law.

Several commenters requested clarification whether the permanent provisions of the Brady law apply to licensed collectors of curios or relics. The transfer of a firearm by a licensed collector is not subject to section 922(t), since the law by its terms applies only to the transfer of a firearm by a licensed importer, manufacturer, or dealer to an unlicensed person. Furthermore, since the permanent provisions of Brady do not apply to transfers among licensees, the transfer of a curio or relic firearm to a licensed collector is not subject to permanent Brady. However, in transactions involving firearms not classified as curios or relics, the licensed collector has the same status as a nonlicensee. Thus, a licensed collector's acquisition of a firearm that is not a curio or relic from an importer, manufacturer, or dealer is subject to the requirements of permanent Brady.

Pawn Transactions

In Notice No. 857, ATF advised that the proposed regulations would apply the permanent provisions of the Brady law to the redemption of a pawned firearm. As ATF noted, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, Public Law 103-322, amended § 922(s) of the GCA to specifically exempt transactions involving the return of a handgun to the person from whom it was received. However, no such exemption appears in § 922(t).

Three hundred thirty-eight commenters disagreed with ATF's interpretation that the permanent provisions of the Brady law apply to the redemption of a pawned firearm. Many of the commenters argue that the law was intended to apply only to the sale of a firearm and not to pawn transactions involving the redemption of a firearm. A national trade association representing 3,600 pawnbrokers suggested that Congress did not intend to cover the redemption of a pawned firearm, and that the term "transfer" in the Brady law referred to a transfer of title. The commenter further contends that the amendment of § 922(s) of the GCA by the Violent Crime Control and

Law Enforcement Act of 1994 "indicates their [Congress'] intent to not apply Brady to pawn loans." Several commenters suggested that because pawn loan customers would not have the disposable income to pay for a NICS check, they would instead sell their firearms on the street through unregulated sources.

After carefully considering the arguments raised by the commenters, ATF has concluded that the permanent provisions of the Brady law apply to the redemption of a pawned firearm. Unlike § 922(s) of the GCA, there is no provision in § 922(t) which exempts transactions involving the return of a firearm to the person from whom it was received.

Furthermore, ATF does not agree with the commenters who suggested that the return of a redeemed firearm is not a "transfer" within the meaning of the permanent provisions of the Brady law. The redemption of a pawned firearm has always been treated as a disposition under the GCA, and a Form 4473 has always been required for such redemptions. Furthermore, in *Huddleston v. United States*, 415 U.S. 814 (1974), the Supreme Court held that the redemption of a pawned firearm was an acquisition within the meaning of the GCA. Thus, there is no basis for exempting the redemption of a pawned firearm from the permanent provisions of Brady.

Consignments

ATF has received inquiries regarding the return by a licensee of a consigned firearm to an unlicensed individual. In these cases, the unlicensed individual has delivered a firearm to the licensee for sale. Sales of the firearm are handled in the same manner as other firearm sales. However, if the licensee does not sell the firearm, it may be returned to the unlicensed individual.

ATF has always treated the return of consigned firearms as a transfer or disposition within the meaning of the GCA. The individual to whom the consigned firearms are returned must complete a Form 4473 in the same manner as any unlicensed individual who is acquiring a firearm from a licensee. Accordingly, the final regulations do not provide any exemption for the return of a consigned firearm.

Repaired and Replacement Firearms

While this issue was not specifically addressed in the proposed rule, approximately 55 comments dealt with the application of permanent Brady to repaired and replacement firearms. Most of those commenters argued that the

return of a repaired firearm to the person from whom it was received should not be considered a "transfer" for purposes of the Brady law.

The notice of proposed rulemaking did not propose that such transactions should be subject to permanent Brady. After carefully considering the comments on this issue, ATF agrees that the return of a repaired or replacement firearm by a licensee is not a "transfer" within the meaning of the Brady law.

Historically, the return of a repaired or replacement firearm by a licensee has been treated in a different fashion from other dispositions under the GCA. Since the enactment of the GCA in 1968, the regulations have provided that a Form 4473 "shall not be required to record the disposition made of a firearm delivered to a licensee for the sole purpose of repair or customizing when such firearm or a replacement firearm is returned to the person from whom received." See 27 CFR 178.124(a).

The final rule does not require NICS checks in any situation in which the transferee is not required to complete a Form 4473. Accordingly, transactions falling within the exemption found in section 178.124(a) are not subject to the requirement for an NICS check.

Time of NICS Check

As proposed in Notice No. 857, § 178.102(c) provided that a NICS check may be relied upon by the licensee only for use in a single transaction and for a period not to exceed 30 days. If the transaction is not completed within the 30-day period, the licensee must initiate a new NICS check prior to completion of the transfer.

ATF received approximately 40 comments on this proposal. Many commenters objected to the proposal that a separate NICS check must be conducted for each separate transaction. They contend that this requirement is unnecessary and places a burden on both NICS and the licensee. Two commenters stated as follows:

The purpose of the check is to ensure the individual who wishes to purchase a firearm is not a prohibited possessor under the law. In this instance, there is no reason to require a separate NICS check if an individual purchases more than one firearm within a 30 day calendar period.

Many other commenters were concerned about the validity of a NICS check with respect to the return or exchange of a newly purchased firearm.

The Brady law provides that a licensee may not transfer a firearm to an unlicensed individual unless, before the completion of the transfer, the licensee contacts NICS. It is clear that the law contemplates that once the transfer is

completed, any additional transfer of a firearm to the same individual would be a separate transfer that would require a separate NICS check. With respect to the return or exchange of a newly purchased firearm, replacement firearms are not subject to a NICS check. However, if the firearm is being returned and exchanged for a different firearm, this constitutes a separate transaction and another NICS check would be required.

Several commenters objected to ATF's proposal that a NICS check should only be valid for 30 calendar days. Three commenters argued that the Brady law does not specify or impose any time limit on the validity of a NICS check. Three other commenters suggested that a NICS check should be acceptable for multiple purchases for 5 years, the same period of time for which a permit is valid.

Another commenter, a trade organization representing approximately 300 firearms dealers, asserted that the proposed 30-day limitation is unreasonable and unnecessary. This commenter states that customers often order firearms and then later return to the licensee's premises to effect the transfer. Based on the experience of its membership, this commenter believed that many transfers do not take place within 30 days, due to the customer's own business commitments or the customer's personal circumstances. Accordingly, this commenter proposed that the NICS check should be valid for a period of 60 days. Another commenter expressed similar concerns, and recommended that the check should be valid for 45 days "to allow normal transactions to occur, given delays and distances normally encountered in firearms sales situations."

As ATF stated in Notice No. 857, it is clear that the Brady law contemplates that the licensee should contact NICS immediately prior to the transfer of a firearm. However, ATF recognized that many States have waiting periods which mandate a delay of up to 10 days before the firearm may be transferred. Thus, the proposed rule provided that a NICS check would be valid in a single transaction for a period of up to 30 days. This would allow the purchaser a reasonable period of time to come back for the firearm in States with lengthy waiting periods.

After carefully considering the comments, ATF has decided not to extend the period in which a NICS check retains its validity. ATF believes that the 30-day period is reasonable in that it allows sufficient time for a purchaser to return to take possession of a firearm. In situations where a

purchaser has ordered a custom-made firearm and a longer delay is required, the licensee may choose to conduct the NICS check after the firearm comes in, rather than at the time that the order is placed. In any event, licensees should try to avoid lengthy delays between the time the NICS check is conducted and the time the firearm is transferred. The 30-day limit provides a concrete limit beyond which the firearm may not be transferred pursuant to a "stale" NICS check.

Permits

The Brady law provides that a licensee is not required to initiate a NICS check where the purchaser presents a permit that allows the purchaser to "possess or acquire a firearm." The final rule clarifies that the permit must be valid under State law. Section 178.102(d)(1)(i) of the proposed regulations clarified that this exception includes permits to carry concealed weapons as well as permits specifically authorizing the purchase of a firearm.

Five commenters expressed opposition to ATF's proposal that a permit to carry concealed weapons was included within the permit exemption provided by permanent Brady. Four of the commenters contend that the proposed regulation expands the scope of the exemption and that the clear language of the Brady law limits the exemption to a permit to "possess or acquire" a firearm. Two commenters maintain that this provision of the law applies only to permits specifically authorizing the purchase of a firearm.

Some commenters assert that excepting concealed weapons permit holders from a NICS check would significantly increase the number of exempt firearms transactions. For example, one commenter noted that "[t]his expansion will dramatically increase the possibility of unlawful firearms purchase[s] in part because the varying state systems for revocation of the permits frequently involve considerable delay."

Notwithstanding these comments, it is ATF's conclusion from the plain language of the Brady law that a permit to "possess" a firearm includes a permit to carry concealed weapons. Furthermore, ATF's position in this matter is consistent with that taken with respect to the permit alternative under the interim provisions of the Brady law. Accordingly, § 178.102(d)(1)(i) is being adopted in the final regulations as proposed.

NICS Checks in Conjunction With the Issuance of Permits

The law provides that for a permit to qualify as an alternative to the NICS check at the time of transfer, it must have been issued not more than 5 years earlier by the State in which the transfer is to take place. Furthermore, the permit is a valid alternative under permanent Brady only if the law of the State provides that such a permit is to be issued only after an authorized government official has verified that the information available to such official does not indicate that possession of a firearm by such other person would be in violation of law.

In construing the language of the statute, the proposed regulations provided that as of November 30, 1998, "the information available to" State officials who issue permits will include a NICS check. The proposed regulations also clarified that if a State did not disqualify all individuals prohibited under Federal law, the permits issued by that State would not be accepted as alternatives under the permanent provisions of the Brady law.

Approximately 3,700 commenters objected to ATF's proposal that the acceptance of permits as alternatives was conditioned upon the State running a NICS check prior to issuing the permit. Most of the commenters contend that the statute does not mandate that State officials conduct a NICS check on all permit applicants. Two commenters argued that "[t]his portion of the proposed regulation violates *Prinz [sic] v. United States*. Here the United States Supreme Court held that "The Federal Government may not compel the States to enact or administer a federal regulatory program.'"

The issuance of regulations setting standards for permits that meet the criteria of the statute in no way implicates Tenth Amendment or Federalism concerns. Neither the Brady law nor the regulations require States to establish or administer permit systems at all. However, the law does set forth certain standards that State permits must meet in order to be recognized as valid Brady alternatives.

As of November 30, 1998, "the information available to" State officials will include NICS. As indicated in Notice No. 857, a NICS check will provide a more extensive background check of the purchaser than other record systems containing only criminal records. NICS will include records from the Department of Defense concerning dishonorable discharges, records from the Department of State regarding individuals who have renounced United

States citizenship, and other information not available in criminal records.

Accordingly, § 178.102(d)(1)(iii) is adopted as proposed.

One commenter noted that Notice No. 857 was silent with respect to State permits issued prior to the effective date of the permanent provisions of the Brady law. Prior to November 30, 1998, the information "available to" State permit officials did not include NICS. Permits issued prior to that date that were recognized by ATF as valid alternatives under interim Brady will continue to be recognized as valid alternatives after November 30, 1998, notwithstanding the fact that no NICS check was conducted prior to the issuance of the permits. These permits will be "grandfathered" for a period not to exceed 5 years or the duration of the permit, whichever is shorter.

Firearms Transaction Record (Form 4473)

In general, the regulations provide that prior to the transfer of a firearm to a prospective purchaser, the buyer must complete, sign, and date a firearms transaction record, Form 4473. The form requests certain information, including the transferee's name, sex, height, weight, race, residence address, date of birth, and place of birth. In Notice No. 857, ATF proposed amending the regulations to solicit additional optional information about the purchaser, including the transferee's social security number, to facilitate the transfer of a firearm (§ 178.124(c)(2)). ATF noted in Notice No. 857 that ATF Form 5300.35, Statement of Intent to Obtain a Handgun (Brady form), currently requests the purchaser's social security number as optional information.

Approximately 8,000 commenters addressed this proposal. Twenty-five commenters misunderstood the proposal and were under the impression the proposed regulation was requiring purchasers to provide their social security number on Form 4473. The remaining commenters expressed other concerns and urged ATF to withdraw the proposed regulation. Many commenters contend that requesting the purchaser's social security number violates the individual's right to privacy. The commenters are also concerned about the possible misuse of the information, including the establishment of a national registry of firearms owners. Other commenters are concerned that the request for a purchaser's social security number as additional optional information may eventually become a requirement. These commenters also believe that a firearm

transfer may be unnecessarily delayed or the purchaser subjected to additional scrutiny if the social security number is not provided.

The final regulations will include the purchaser's social security number on Form 4473 as optional information. The social security number is a unique identifier. ATF believes that providing this information on Form 4473 will facilitate the transfer of a firearm. As discussed in Notice No. 857, ATF believes this additional information will help minimize the misidentification of firearms purchasers as felons or other prohibited persons whose receipt and possession would violate the law. For example, by providing this information the transferee might avoid confusion with a prohibited buyer who has the same name and date of birth as the transferee. Nevertheless, providing the social security number on Form 4473 is optional under the proposed regulation and the purchaser is not required to provide such information.

With respect to the commenters' concern regarding the establishment of a national registry of firearms owners, ATF would note that the registration of firearms, firearms owners, or firearms transactions or dispositions is specifically prohibited by 18 U.S.C. 926(a) and section 103(i) of the Brady law. ATF would further note that Forms 4473 are maintained by dealers, not the Federal Government.

In Notice No. 857, ATF proposed that in any transaction for which a licensee receives a unique identification number from NICS, such number will be recorded on Form 4473 and retained in the records of the licensee, regardless of whether the transaction is approved or denied by NICS, and regardless of whether the firearm is actually transferred (27 CFR 178.102(b)). Several commenters objected to the proposed requirement that licensees retain copies of Form 4473 for denied NICS checks or where there is no transfer of a firearm. The commenters argue that this requirement is unnecessary and only serves to increase the paperwork burden on licensees. ATF disagrees with the commenters and finds the requirement to be both necessary and warranted. As explained in the notice, requiring licensees to retain Form 4473 in all cases will enable ATF to determine compliance with the law by licensees and purchasers. Accordingly, the regulation is being adopted as proposed. The final rule clarifies that the transaction number provided by NICS shall include either a NICS transaction number or, in States where the State is recognized as a point of contact for

NICS checks, a State transaction number.

Seven commenters contend that the Brady law requires Form 4473 to be destroyed after each firearm transaction. Specifically, § 922(t)(2)(C) provides that if a NICS check indicates receipt of a firearm by a prospective purchaser would not violate Federal or State law,

[T]he system shall . . . destroy all records of the system with respect to the call (other than the identifying number and the date the number was assigned) and all records of the system relating to the person or the transfer.

The Brady law does not require the Form 4473 to be destroyed after each firearm transaction. The "system" mentioned in the law refers to the national instant background check system (NICS) established by the Attorney General. In addition, the Department of Justice has issued proposed regulations with respect to the destruction of records in the NICS (AG Order No. 2158-98; June 4, 1998, 63 FR 30430).

Several commenters misinterpreted § 178.124(c)(3) as proposed by ATF. It is their understanding that the regulation requires licensees to provide NICS with information regarding the firearm being transferred (e.g., type, model, caliber or gauge, etc.). The commenters are opposed to NICS collecting and maintaining such information. The proposed regulation was not intended to require licensees to provide NICS with specific information about an individual's firearms purchase. For clarification purposes, ATF is amending § 178.124(c) and revising Form 4473 to specify that information about the firearm being transferred (e.g., the name of the manufacturer, the type, model, caliber, etc.) will be recorded on the Form 4473 by the licensee after the completion of the NICS check.

Civil Penalties

As explained in the notice of proposed rulemaking, section 922(t)(5) of the GCA provides that a licensee who knowingly transfers a firearm and knowingly fails to comply with the provisions of section 922(t)(1) with respect to the transfer may be subject to revocation or suspension of the license for up to 6 months and a civil fine of not more than \$5,000. This provision applies only where at the time that the transferee most recently proposed the transfer, the national instant criminal background check system was operating and information was available to the system demonstrating that the transferee's receipt of a firearm would violate section 922(g) or (n) of the GCA, or State law.

The GCA, 18 U.S.C. 923(e), already provides ATF with authority to revoke a firearms license, after notice and opportunity for hearing, where the licensee has willfully violated any of the provisions of the GCA or the regulations issued thereunder. Furthermore, section 923(f) provides that revocation actions are subject to *de novo* judicial review by the district court in which the licensee resides or has his principal place of business.

ATF is amending Subpart E of Part 178 to provide that the existing procedures for revocation of licenses will also apply to the suspension and revocation of licenses under section 922(t)(5), as well as the imposition of a civil fine under this provision. The final rule also clarifies that such actions are subject to *de novo* judicial review by the district court.

Miscellaneous

Approximately 3,700 commenters expressed opposition to proposed § 178.97(b). This section requires a NICS check where a club or similar organization temporarily furnishes firearms to participants in a trap or similar shooting activity for use off the premises. The commenters contend that this requirement "is neither required by, nor is consistent with, the statute." ATF views the activity mentioned above in the same manner as the loan or rental of a firearm to a nonlicensee for temporary use off the licensed premises for lawful sporting purposes. In that regard, § 178.97(a) requires the licensee to record the transaction in his permanent records of acquisition and disposition and on Form 4473. It is ATF's position that such a transfer is subject to the requirements of the Brady law. Accordingly, § 178.97(b) is adopted in the final regulations as proposed.

ATF is amending § 178.102(c) by revising Example 2 at the end of the section to clarify that a firearms transaction is completed when the licensee executes the Form 4473 and the firearm is transferred to the purchaser. Some commenters believe the wording of the proposed regulation is confusing and implies that a firearms transaction is completed when the licensee executes the Form 4473, regardless of when the actual transfer of the firearm takes place.

The proposed regulation in § 178.125(e) would have required dealers to record in their records of disposition the identification number provided by NICS. ATF has determined that requirement is unnecessary since the final regulations require licensees to record the unique identification number provided by NICS on Form 4473 and to retain each Form 4473 for a period of

not less than 20 years after the date of sale or disposition. Accordingly, ATF is not amending the regulation.

Finally, section 178.125a(a) is being amended to provide that licensees are not required to comply with the provisions of § 178.102 when selling firearms from the licensee's personal collection, provided that the licensee has maintained the firearm as part of his or her personal collection for at least one year.

Executive Order 12866

It has been determined that this final rule is not a significant regulatory action as defined in Executive Order 12866. Therefore, a Regulatory Assessment is not required.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

It is hereby certified that this final rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The revenue effects of this rulemaking on small businesses flow directly from the underlying statute. Likewise, any secondary or incidental effects, and any reporting, recordkeeping, or other compliance burdens flow directly from the statute. Accordingly, a regulatory flexibility analysis is not required.

Paperwork Reduction Act

The collections of information contained in this final regulation have been reviewed and approved by the Office of Management and Budget in accordance with the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3507(d)) under control number 1512-0544. Other collections of information contained in this final rule have been approved under control numbers: 1512-0520, 1512-0006, and 1512-0524 (§ 178.129(c)) and 1512-0129 and 1512-0526 (§ 178.129(d), (e), and (f)). An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid control number assigned by the Office of Management and Budget.

The collections of information in this final rule are in 27 CFR 178.102, 178.124(c), 178.129(b), 178.131, and 178.150. This information is required to implement the provisions of Public Law 103-159, relating to the permanent provisions of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act. The collections of information are required to ensure compliance with the law. The likely respondents and/or recordkeepers are individuals and businesses.

Estimated number of respondents: 106,000.

Estimated burden hours: 1 hour.

However, the above mentioned regulations which implement the Brady law require amendments to ATF Form 4473. In order to prevent a duplication of burden hours, the burden hours that are associated with the collections of information in these regulations (1,136,266 hours) will be reported under OMB control number 1512-0129, the Supporting Statement for ATF Form 4473, Firearms Transaction Record, Part I. The following paragraphs explain the additional burden hours.

Section 178.102 requires, with some exceptions, licensees to contact NICS before transferring any firearm to an unlicensed individual. The estimated total annual reporting and/or recordkeeping burden associated with this requirement is 824,000 hours. Section 178.124(c) requires licensees to record on Form 4473 the date the licensee contacts NICS and any identification number provided by NICS. The licensee must also verify the identity of the person acquiring the firearm by examining an identification document presented by the transferee. Form 4473 will include certain optional information about the purchaser, such as the person's social security number and alien registration number. Section 178.131 requires licensees to maintain certain records for firearms transactions not subject to a NICS check. The estimated total annual reporting and/or recordkeeping burden associated with §§ 178.124(c) and 178.131 is 308,266 hours. Section 178.129(b) requires licensees to retain a completed Form 4473 for a period of not less than 5 years where the transfer of a firearm is not made. The estimated total annual recordkeeping burden associated with this requirement is 4,000 hours. Section 178.150 provides for an alternative to NICS in certain geographical locations. Licensees must submit a written application to the Director containing certain information. The same requirement currently applies to the waiting period provision of the Brady law for transfers of handguns. Since this requirement was established in 1994, no licensee has qualified for an exception from the provisions of Brady based on geographical location. As such, ATF does not believe that there is any reporting and/or recordkeeping burden associated with the requirements of § 178.150 with regard to NICS.

Certain collections of information contained in § 178.129(b), previously approved under control numbers 1512-0520, 1512-0006, and 1512-0524, are merely being redesignated as § 178.129(c) in this final rule. Similarly, the collections of information in § 178.129(c), (d), and (e), previously

approved under control numbers 1512-0129 and 1512-0526, are being redesignated as § 178.129(d), (e), and (f) in the final regulation.

Comments concerning the accuracy of these burden estimates and suggestions for reducing the burden should be directed to the Chief, Document Services Branch, Room 3110, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, 650 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20226, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Attention: Desk Officer for the Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Washington, DC 20503.

Disclosure

Copies of the notice of proposed rulemaking, all written comments, and this final rule will be available for public inspection during normal business hours at: ATF Public Reading Room, Room 6480, 650 Massachusetts Avenue, NW., Washington, DC.

Drafting Information. The author of this document is James P. Ficaretta, Regulations Division, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

List of Subjects

Part 178

Administrative practice and procedure, Arms and ammunition, Authority delegations, Customs duties and inspection, Exports, Imports, Military personnel, Penalties, Reporting requirements, Research, Seizures and forfeitures, and Transportation.

Part 179

Administrative practice and procedure, Arms and munitions, Authority delegations, Customs duties and inspection, Exports, Imports, Military personnel, Penalties, Reporting requirements, Research, Seizures and forfeitures, and Transportation.

Authority and Issuance

For the reasons discussed in the preamble, ATF amends 27 CFR Parts 178 and 179 as follows:

PART 178—COMMERCE IN FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION

Paragraph 1. The authority citation for 27 CFR Part 178 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 5 U.S.C. 552(a); 18 U.S.C. 847, 921-930; 44 U.S.C. 3504(h).

Par. 2. Section 178.11 is amended by adding a definition for "NICS" to read as follows:

§ 178.11 Meaning of terms.

* * * * *

NICS. The National Instant Criminal Background Check System established by the Attorney General pursuant to 18 U.S.C. 922(t).

* * * * *

Par. 3. Section 178.73 is revised to read as follows:

§ 178.73 Notice of revocation, suspension, or imposition of civil fine.

(a) *Basis for action.* Whenever the regional director (compliance) has reason to believe that a licensee has willfully violated any provision of the Act or this part, a notice of revocation of the license, ATF Form 4500, may be issued. In addition, a notice of revocation, suspension, or imposition of a civil fine may be issued on ATF Form 4500 whenever the regional director (compliance) has reason to believe that a licensee has knowingly transferred a firearm to an unlicensed person and knowingly failed to comply with the requirements of 18 U.S.C. 922(t)(1) with respect to the transfer and, at the time that the transferee most recently proposed the transfer, the national instant criminal background check system was operating and information was available to the system demonstrating that the transferee's receipt of a firearm would violate 18 U.S.C. 922(g) or 922(n) or State law.

(b) *Issuance of notice.* The notice shall set forth the matters of fact constituting the violations specified, dates, places, and the sections of law and regulations violated. The regional director (compliance) shall afford the licensee 15 days from the date of receipt of the notice in which to request a hearing prior to suspension or revocation of the license, or imposition of a civil fine. If the licensee does not file a timely request for a hearing, the regional director (compliance) shall issue a final notice of suspension or revocation and/or imposition of a civil fine on ATF Form 4501, as provided in § 178.74.

Par. 4. Section 178.74 is revised to read as follows:

§ 178.74 Request for hearing after notice of suspension, revocation, or imposition of civil fine.

If a licensee desires a hearing after receipt of a notice of suspension or revocation of a license, or imposition of a civil fine, the licensee shall file a request, in duplicate, with the regional director (compliance) within 15 days after receipt of the notice of suspension or revocation of a license, or imposition of a civil fine. On receipt of such request, the regional director (compliance) shall, as expeditiously as

possible, make necessary arrangements for the hearing and advise the licensee of the date, time, location and the name of the officer before whom the hearing will be held. Such notification shall be made no less than 10 days in advance of the date set for the hearing. On conclusion of the hearing and consideration of all the relevant presentations made by the licensee or the licensee's representative, the regional director (compliance) shall render a decision and shall prepare a brief summary of the findings and conclusions on which the decision is based. If the decision is that the license should be revoked, or, in actions under 18 U.S.C. 922(t)(5), that the license should be revoked or suspended, and/or that a civil fine should be imposed, a certified copy of the summary shall be furnished to the licensee with the final notice of revocation, suspension, or imposition of a civil fine on ATF Form 4501. If the decision is that the license should not be revoked, or in actions under 18 U.S.C. 922(t)(5), that the license should not be revoked or suspended, and a civil fine should not be imposed, the licensee shall be notified in writing.

Par. 5. Section 178.78 is revised to read as follows:

§ 178.78 Operations by licensee after notice.

In any case where denial, suspension, or revocation proceedings are pending before the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, or notice of denial, suspension, or revocation has been served on the licensee and he has filed timely request for a hearing, the license in the possession of the licensee shall remain in effect even though such license has expired, or the suspension or revocation date specified in the notice of revocation on Form 4500 served on the licensee has passed: *Provided*, That with respect to a license that has expired, the licensee has timely filed an application for the renewal of his license. If a licensee is dissatisfied with a posthearing decision revoking or suspending the license or denying the application or imposing a civil fine, as the case may be, he may, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. 923(f)(3), within 60 days after receipt of the final notice denying the application or revoking or suspending the license or imposing a civil fine, file a petition for judicial review of such action. Such petition should be filed with the U.S. district court for the district in which the applicant or licensee resides or has his principal place of business. In such case, when the regional director (compliance) finds that justice so requires, he may

postpone the effective date of suspension or revocation of a license or authorize continued operations under the expired license, as applicable, pending judicial review.

Par. 6. Section 178.96 is amended by revising the first sentence in paragraph (b), and by revising paragraph (c) to read as follows:

§ 178.96 Out-of-State and mail order sales.

* * * * *

(b) A licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, or licensed dealer may sell a firearm that is not subject to the provisions of § 178.102(a) to a nonlicensee who does not appear in person at the licensee's business premises if the nonlicensee is a resident of the same State in which the licensee's business premises are located, and the nonlicensee furnishes to the licensee the firearms transaction record, Form 4473, required by § 178.124. * * *

(c)(1) A licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, or licensed dealer may sell or deliver a rifle or shotgun, and a licensed collector may sell or deliver a rifle or shotgun that is a curio or relic to a nonlicensed resident of a State other than the State in which the licensee's place of business is located if—

(i) The purchaser meets with the licensee in person at the licensee's premises to accomplish the transfer, sale, and delivery of the rifle or shotgun;

(ii) The licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, or licensed dealer complies with the provisions of § 178.102;

(iii) The purchaser furnishes to the licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, or licensed dealer the firearms transaction record, Form 4473, required by § 178.124; and

(iv) The sale, delivery, and receipt of the rifle or shotgun fully comply with the legal conditions of sale in both such States.

(2) For purposes of paragraph (c) of this section, any licensed manufacturer, licensed importer, or licensed dealer is presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have had actual knowledge of the State laws and published ordinances of both such States.

Par. 7. Section 178.97 is revised to read as follows:

§ 178.97 Loan or rental of firearms.

(a) A licensee may lend or rent a firearm to any person for temporary use off the premises of the licensee for lawful sporting purposes: *Provided*, That the delivery of the firearm to such person is not prohibited by § 178.99(b) or § 178.99(c), the licensee complies

with the requirements of § 178.102, and the licensee records such loan or rental in the records required to be kept by him under Subpart H of this part.

(b) A club, association, or similar organization temporarily furnishing firearms (whether by loan, rental, or otherwise) to participants in a skeet, trap, target, or similar shooting activity for use at the time and place such activity is held does not, unattended by other circumstances, cause such club, association, or similar organization to be engaged in the business of a dealer in firearms or as engaging in firearms transactions. Therefore, licensing and recordkeeping requirements contained in this part pertaining to firearms transactions would not apply to this temporary furnishing of firearms for use on premises on which such an activity is conducted.

Par. 8. Section 178.102 is revised to read as follows:

§ 178.102 Sales or deliveries of firearms on and after November 30, 1998.

(a) *Background check.* Except as provided in paragraph (d) of this section, a licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, or licensed dealer (the licensee) shall not sell, deliver, or transfer a firearm to any other person who is not licensed under this part unless the licensee meets the following requirements:

(1) Before the completion of the transfer, the licensee has contacted NICS;

(2)(i) NICS informs the licensee that it has no information that receipt of the firearm by the transferee would be in violation of Federal or State law and provides the licensee with a unique identification number; or

(ii) Three business days (meaning days on which State offices are open) have elapsed from the date the licensee contacted NICS and NICS has not notified the licensee that receipt of the firearm by the transferee would be in violation of law; and

(3) The licensee verifies the identity of the transferee by examining the identification document presented in accordance with the provisions of § 178.124(c).

Example for paragraph (a). A licensee contacts NICS on Thursday, and gets a "delayed" response. The licensee does not get a further response from NICS. If State offices are not open on Saturday and Sunday, 3 business days would have elapsed on the following Tuesday. The licensee may transfer the firearm on the next day, Wednesday.

(b) *Transaction number.* In any transaction for which a licensee receives a transaction number from NICS (which shall include either a NICS transaction

number or, in States where the State is recognized as a point of contact for NICS checks, a State transaction number), such number shall be recorded on a firearms transaction record, Form 4473, which shall be retained in the records of the licensee in accordance with the provisions of § 178.129. This applies regardless of whether the transaction is approved or denied by NICS, and regardless of whether the firearm is actually transferred.

(c) *Time limitation on NICS checks.* A NICS check conducted in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section may be relied upon by the licensee only for use in a single transaction, and for a period not to exceed 30 calendar days from the date that NICS was initially contacted. If the transaction is not completed within the 30-day period, the licensee shall initiate a new NICS check prior to completion of the transfer.

Example 1 for paragraph (c). A purchaser completes the Form 4473 on December 15, 1998, and a NICS check is initiated by the licensee on that date. The licensee is informed by NICS that the information available to the system does not indicate that receipt of the firearm by the transferee would be in violation of law, and a unique identification number is provided. However, the State imposes a 7-day waiting period on all firearms transactions, and the purchaser does not return to pick up the firearm until January 22, 1999. The licensee must conduct another NICS check before transferring the firearm to the purchaser.

Example 2 for paragraph (c). A purchaser completes the Form 4473 on January 25, 1999, and arranges for the purchase of a single firearm. A NICS check is initiated by the licensee on that date. The licensee is informed by NICS that the information available to the system does not indicate that receipt of the firearm by the transferee would be in violation of law, and a unique identification number is provided. The State imposes a 7-day waiting period on all firearms transactions, and the purchaser returns to pick up the firearm on February 15, 1999. Before the licensee executes the Form 4473, and the firearm is transferred, the purchaser decides to purchase an additional firearm. The transfer of these two firearms is considered a single transaction; accordingly, the licensee may add the second firearm to the Form 4473, and transfer that firearm without conducting another NICS check.

Example 3 for paragraph (c). A purchaser completes a Form 4473 on February 15, 1999. The licensee receives a unique identification number from NICS on that date, the Form 4473 is executed by the licensee, and the firearm is transferred. On February 20, 1999, the purchaser returns to the licensee's premises and wishes to purchase a second firearm. The purchase of the second firearm is a separate transaction; thus, a new NICS check must be initiated by the licensee.

(d) *Exceptions to NICS check.* The provisions of paragraph (a) of this section shall not apply if—

(1) The transferee has presented to the licensee a valid permit or license that—

(i) Allows the transferee to possess, acquire, or carry a firearm;

(ii) Was issued not more than 5 years earlier by the State in which the transfer is to take place; and

(iii) The law of the State provides that such a permit or license is to be issued only after an authorized government official has verified that the information available to such official does not indicate that possession of a firearm by the transferee would be in violation of Federal, State, or local law: *Provided*, That on and after November 30, 1998, the information available to such official includes the NICS;

(2) The firearm is subject to the provisions of the National Firearms Act and has been approved for transfer under 27 CFR Part 179; or

(3) On application of the licensee, in accordance with the provisions of § 178.150, the Director has certified that compliance with paragraph (a)(1) of this section is impracticable.

(e) The document referred to in paragraph (d)(1) of this section (or a copy thereof) shall be retained or the required information from the document shall be recorded on the firearms transaction record in accordance with the provisions of § 178.131.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1512-0544)

Par. 9. Section 178.124 is amended by revising paragraph (c), by removing "paragraph (c)(1)(ii)" in paragraphs (d) and (e) and adding in its place "paragraph (c)(3)(ii)", by revising the first sentence in paragraph (f), and by revising the parenthetical text at the end of the section to read as follows:

§ 178.124 Firearms transaction record.

* * * * *

(c)(1) Prior to making an over-the-counter transfer of a firearm to a nonlicensee who is a resident of the State in which the licensee's business premises is located, the licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, or licensed dealer so transferring the firearm shall obtain a Form 4473 from the transferee showing the transferee's name, sex, residence address (including county or similar political subdivision), date and place of birth; height, weight and race of the transferee; whether the transferee is a citizen of the United States; the transferee's State of residence; and certification by the transferee that the transferee is not prohibited by the Act from transporting or shipping a firearm in interstate or foreign commerce or receiving a firearm which has been shipped or transported

in interstate or foreign commerce or possessing a firearm in or affecting commerce.

(2) In order to facilitate the transfer of a firearm and enable NICS to verify the identity of the person acquiring the firearm, ATF Form 4473 also requests certain optional information. This information includes the transferee's social security number and alien registration number (if applicable). Such information may help avoid the possibility of the transferee being misidentified as a felon or other prohibited person.

(3) After the transferee has executed the Form 4473, the licensee:

(i) Shall verify the identity of the transferee by examining the identification document (as defined in § 178.11) presented, and shall note on the Form 4473 the type of identification used;

(ii) Shall, in the case of a transferee who is an alien legally in the United States, cause the transferee to present documentation establishing that the transferee is a resident of the State (as defined in § 178.11) in which the licensee's business premises is located, and shall note on the form the documentation used. Examples of acceptable documentation include utility bills or a lease agreement which show that the transferee has resided in the State continuously for at least 90 days prior to the transfer of the firearm; and

(iii) Shall comply with the requirements of § 178.102 and record on the form the date on which the licensee contacted the NICS, as well as any response provided by the system, including any identification number provided by the system.

(4) The licensee shall identify the firearm to be transferred by listing on the Form 4473 the name of the manufacturer, the name of the importer (if any), the type, model, caliber or gauge, and the serial number of the firearm.

(5) The licensee shall sign and date the form if the licensee does not know or have reasonable cause to believe that the transferee is disqualified by law from receiving the firearm and transfer the firearm described on the Form 4473.

(f) Form 4473 shall be submitted, in duplicate, to a licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, or licensed dealer by a transferee who is purchasing or otherwise acquiring a firearm by other than an over-the-counter transaction, who is not subject to the provisions of § 178.102(a), and who is a resident of the State in which the

licensee's business premises are located.

(Paragraph (c) approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1512-0544; paragraph (f) approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1512-0130; all other recordkeeping approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1512-0129)

§ 178.124a [Amended]

Par. 10. Section 178.124a is amended by removing the period at the end of the introductory text of paragraph (e) and adding in its place a colon.

§ 178.125a [Amended]

Par. 11. Section 178.125a is amended by adding "comply with the provisions of § 178.102 or" after the phrase "is not required to" in the introductory text of paragraph (a).

Par. 12. Section 178.129 is amended by revising paragraph (b), by redesignating paragraphs (c), (d), and (e) as paragraphs (d), (e), and (f), by adding new paragraph (c), and by revising the parenthetical text at the end of the section to read as follows:

§ 178.129 Record retention.

(b) *Firearms transaction record.* Licensees shall retain each Form 4473 and Form 4473(LV) for a period of not less than 20 years after the date of sale or disposition. Where a licensee has initiated a NICS check for a proposed firearms transaction, but the sale, delivery, or transfer of the firearm is not made, the licensee shall record any transaction number on the Form 4473, and retain the Form 4473 for a period of not less than 5 years after the date of the NICS inquiry. Forms 4473 shall be retained in the licensee's records as provided in § 178.124(b): *Provided*, That Forms 4473 with respect to which a sale, delivery or transfer did not take place shall be separately retained in alphabetical (by name of transferee) or chronological (by date of transferee's certification) order.

(c) *Statement of intent to obtain a handgun, reports of multiple sales or other disposition of pistols and revolvers, and reports of theft or loss of firearms.* Licensees shall retain each Form 5300.35 (Statement of Intent to Obtain a Handgun(s)) for a period of not less than 5 years after notice of the intent to obtain the handgun was forwarded to the chief law enforcement officer, as defined in § 178.150(c). Licensees shall retain each copy of Form 3310.4 (Report of Multiple Sale or Other Disposition of Pistols and Revolvers) for a period of not less than 5 years after the

date of sale or other disposition. Licensees shall retain each copy of Form 3310.11 (Federal Firearms Licensee Theft/Loss Report) for a period of not less than 5 years after the date the theft or loss was reported to ATF.

(Paragraph (b) approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1512-0544; Paragraph (c) approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control numbers 1512-0520, 1512-0006, and 1512-0524; Paragraph (f) approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1512-0526; all other recordkeeping approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1512-0129)

§ 178.130 [Removed]

Par. 13. Section 178.130 is removed.

Par. 14. Section 178.131 is revised to read as follows:

§ 178.131 Firearms transactions not subject to a NICS check.

(a)(1) A licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, or licensed dealer whose sale, delivery, or transfer of a firearm is made pursuant to the alternative provisions of § 178.102(d) and is not subject to the NICS check prescribed by § 178.102(a) shall maintain the records required by paragraph (a) of this section.

(2) If the transfer is pursuant to a permit or license in accordance with § 178.102(d)(1), the licensee shall either retain a copy of the purchaser's permit or license and attach it to the firearms transaction record, Form 4473, or record on the firearms transaction record, Form 4473, any identifying number, the date of issuance, and the expiration date (if provided) from the permit or license.

(3) If the transfer is pursuant to a certification by ATF in accordance with §§ 178.102(d)(3) and 178.150, the licensee shall maintain the certification as part of the records required to be kept under this subpart and for the period prescribed for the retention of Form 5300.35 in § 178.129(c).

(b) The requirements of this section shall be in addition to any other recordkeeping requirements contained in this part.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1512-0544)

Par. 15. Section 178.150 is revised to read as follows:

§ 178.150 Alternative to NICS in certain geographical locations.

(a) The provisions of § 178.102(d)(3) shall be applicable when the Director has certified that compliance with the provisions of § 178.102(a)(1) is impracticable because:

(1) The ratio of the number of law enforcement officers of the State in

which the transfer is to occur to the number of square miles of land area of the State does not exceed 0.0025;

(2) The business premises of the licensee at which the transfer is to occur are extremely remote in relation to the chief law enforcement officer; and

(3) There is an absence of telecommunications facilities in the geographical area in which the business premises are located.

(b) A licensee who desires to obtain a certification under this section shall submit a written request to the Director. Each request shall be executed under the penalties of perjury and contain information sufficient for the Director to make such certification. Such information shall include statistical data, official reports, or other statements of government agencies pertaining to the ratio of law enforcement officers to the number of square miles of land area of

a State and statements of government agencies and private utility companies regarding the absence of telecommunications facilities in the geographical area in which the licensee's business premises are located.

(c) For purposes of this section and § 178.129(c), the "chief law enforcement officer" means the chief of police, the sheriff, or an equivalent officer or the designee of any such individual.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1512-0544)

**PART 179—MACHINE GUNS,
DESTRUCTIVE DEVICES, AND
CERTAIN OTHER FIREARMS**

Par. 16. The authority citation for 27 CFR part 179 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 26 U.S.C. 7805.

Par. 17. Section 179.86 is amended by adding a sentence at the end of the section to read as follows:

§ 179.86 Action on application.

* * * In addition to any other records checks that may be conducted to determine whether the transfer, receipt, or possession of a firearm would place the transferee in violation of law, the Director shall contact the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

Signed: October 1, 1998.

John W. Magaw,
Director.

Approved: October 16, 1998.

John P. Simpson,
*Deputy Assistant Secretary (Regulatory, Tariff
and Trade Enforcement).*

[FR Doc. 98-28986 Filed 10-28-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4810-31-P