

FAQs for CROSSBOW PERMIT (R12-4-216) AND CHAMP (R12-4-217) RULE CHANGES

(as approved by the Arizona Secretary of State February 11, 2026)

When did the rulemaking changes occur?

Arizona Game & Fish Department (Department) reviews rule packages every five years. Article 2, which contains the crossbow permit and CHAMP, was reviewed beginning in 2023. The Department accepted public comments throughout the rulemaking process. The public comment period was open for the most recent proposed Article 2 rulemaking from July 11–Aug 9, 2025. The Commission voted to approve the final rulemaking package on September 5, 2025, in Eagar, AZ. The Arizona Secretary of State's Office approved the rule package for publication on February 11, 2026.

When will the new rule take effect?

The new rule package will be effective July 1, 2026. The FAQ information here is not intended to be comprehensive; rather it outlines significant changes in the rules for crossbow permits and CHAMP. To see the amended rules, please consult the 'Article 2 Notice of Final Rulemaking' or the 'Article 2 Rules' at www.azgfd.gov/rulemaking (see "Rulemaking Updates"). Individuals seeking a crossbow permit (R12-4-216) or CHAMP (R12-4-217) should review these rules prior to seeking a medical evaluation.

Will my current crossbow permit or CHAMP still be valid?

No. ALL EXISTING crossbow and CHAMP permits will not be valid after June 30, 2026. Any crossbow permits issued after July 1, 2026 will be valid up to one year from the date the certification is signed by the qualified physician (not the date the application is received by the Department). Any CHAMP permits issued after July 1, 2026 will be valid according to the published rule. Thus any hunter currently holding a crossbow permit or CHAMP who applies, for example, for fall 2026 archery-only hunts in the February or June 2026 draws **must acquire** a new crossbow permit or CHAMP on or after July 1, 2026 to legally use a crossbow or exercise CHAMP privileges if successfully drawn for any fall 2026 archery-only hunts.

How do I get a new crossbow permit or CHAMP?

Any person seeking to obtain a crossbow permit or CHAMP after July 1, 2026 must submit an application to the Department. The Department will send an announcement out to the public when the updated applications are available later this spring. The updated application forms will be made available and should ONLY be obtained from any Department office or online at www.azgfd.gov to ensure the correct forms are used. The updated application forms will be noted as such. Be sure to print out the updated crossbow permit or CHAMP application on the Department's website prior to visiting

with a qualified physician. Applications using the old forms will not be accepted for either permit.

FOR CROSSBOW PERMITS (R12-4-216)

Which doctors can certify me for a Crossbow Permit (per R12-4-216)?

Any individual seeking a crossbow permit must be evaluated by a qualified physician. “Qualified physicians” are currently licensed, board-certified medical or osteopathic physicians (MD or DO only) who have an unrestricted license to practice medicine in any U.S. state or U.S. territory. The MD or DO must primarily practice or specialize in musculoskeletal or neuromuscular disorders, diseases, or conditions that cause a physical impairment that substantially limits the use of a standard bow and arrow for hunting. An applicant may use the applicant’s primary care physician if the physician meets the requirements of a ‘Qualified Physician’.

What medical conditions qualify me for a crossbow permit?

The crossbow permit is intended to allow a person with a disability who cannot draw and hold a bow to use a crossbow during an archery-only hunt. “Disability” as it applies to the rule means a physical impairment that substantially limits one or more life activities, but does not include typical or natural physiological conditions associated with age or gender that may affect physical abilities.

A qualified physician must certify 1) the applicant has a disability (as defined above), 2) the disability substantially limits the applicant’s ability to use a standard bow and arrow for hunting; and 3) the applicant’s physical limitations do not prevent the applicant from using a crossbow for hunting. The qualified physician must affirm on the certification that the applicant’s substantial physical limitation that prohibits drawing and holding a bow at full draw is due to one of more of the following conditions:

- An amputation involving three or more fingers at the proximal interphalangeal joint, wrist, elbow, or shoulder that prevents stable function to use a bow;
- Spinal cord injury affecting a hand, wrist, arm, or shoulder;
- Weakness resulting from a disability of the muscles, nerves, joints or connective tissue in the shoulder, arm, wrist, hand, or back used in drawing and holding a bow at full draw. The weakness is confirmed and documented using a reliable and appropriate functional capacity evaluation, upper extremity performance test or manual muscle test (MMT) where the results correlate with a physical impairment substantially limiting the ability to use a conventional bow. Using a MMT requires a score of 3 or worse on a scale of 0 to 5 to qualify an applicant for a crossbow permit. Weakness that is appropriate for age or gender or

deconditioning not due to a chronic medical problem shall not be considered a reason for a crossbow permit.

- Restricted range of motion, where range of motion is assessed using a medically-accepted goniometric evaluation system and the score correlates with a physical impairment substantially limiting the ability to use a bow.

A qualified physician shall assess the level of impairment on the applicant's ability to use a bow in relation to other people of same gender and age who have no physical limitations using a bow. An applicant should be assessed on whether the applicant's disability prevents the functional equivalent of holding a bow steady in a full draw position with a minimum of 30 pounds of resistance at full draw and holding a full draw for at least four seconds.

What needs to be included in the application for a crossbow permit?

In addition to applicant's personal and contact information, physical description, and affirmation that the applicant meets the requirements for a crossbow permit and the information provided is true and accurate, as stipulated in R12-4-216 (E), and the qualified physician's certification that an applicant's inability to draw and hold a bow at full draw is due to one or more of the aforementioned conditions, the completed application must include the following:

- A narrative statement in lay terms in the qualified physician's medical certification that explains how the applicant's impairment substantially limits the individual's use of a bow based on the medical criteria listed above;
- Acknowledgement by the qualified physician with signature that the attesting qualified physician understands that a knowingly false or fraudulent submission may result in a complaint of unprofessional conduct to the appropriate medical board;
- Submission of the qualified physician's evaluation of the applicant's disability and physical limitations and all other application records;
- Payment of the applicable fee required under R12-4-102.

What restrictions apply to the crossbow permit?

The following restrictions apply only to archery-only hunts. Hunters may continue to use a crossbow without these restrictions in any HAM, Muzzleloader, or General season:

- The crossbow permit allows use of a crossbow, as defined under R12-4-101, that is restricted to a single bowstring, capable of firing only a single arrow or single bolt with each loading and cocking action.
- The crossbow permit prohibits use of magnifying scopes, magnifying red dots, or other magnifying optics. A 1x magnification is not considered a magnifying optic

on any of these accessories. The use of illuminated reticles, illuminated sights or illuminated sight pins is also not prohibited.

- Any attached accessories or built-in accessories are prohibited if they throw, cast, or project an artificial light or electronically alter or intensify a light source for the purpose of visibly enhancing an animal image or placing a point of aim on an animal.
- The crossbow permit prohibits use of any form of tripod, bipod or other device used to stabilize or rest a crossbow in use; this does not preclude use of a natural structure (e.g. tree limb, rock, fence post).

CHAMP holders with a valid crossbow permit and crossbow permit holders with an amputation involving 3 or more fingers at the proximal interphalangeal joint, or amputation at the wrist, elbow, or shoulder that prevents stable function to use a bow are exempt from this restriction.

FOR CHAMP (R12-4-217)

Which doctors can certify me for a CHAMP (per R12-4-217)?

Any individual seeking a CHAMP must be evaluated by a qualified physician. A “qualified physician” means a currently licensed, board-certified medical or osteopathic physician (MD or DO only) who has an unrestricted license to practice medicine in any U.S. state or U.S. territory. The MD or DO must primarily practice or specialize in disorders, diseases, or conditions that cause a severe permanent disability as that term is defined below. A primary care physician may not meet the requirements of a ‘Qualified Physician’.

What medical conditions qualify me for a CHAMP?

The CHAMP is intended to allow a disabled person with one or more severe permanent disabilities impairing mobility to perform activities while hunting that are normally prohibited under A.R.S. § 17-301. For purposes of a CHAMP, a “severe permanent disability” means one or more permanent physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation of both upper and lower limbs, permanent use of wheelchair, crutches, or a walker, arthritis, autism, blindness, extensive burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, intellectual disability, muscular dystrophy, musculoskeletal disorders, neurological disorders, paraplegia, pulmonary disorders, quadriplegia and other spinal cord conditions, sickle cell anemia, and end stage renal disease or a combination of permanent disabilities resulting in comparable substantial life function limitations.

What needs to be included in the application for a CHAMP?

In addition to applicant’s personal and contact information, physical description, and affirmation that the applicant meets the requirements for a CHAMP and the information

provided is true and accurate, as stipulated in R12-4-217 (E), and the qualified physician's certification that the applicant is a person with a severe permanent disability as defined above, the completed application must include the following:

- Acknowledgement by the qualified physician with signature that the attesting qualified physician understands that a knowingly false or fraudulent submission may result in a complaint of unprofessional conduct to the appropriate medical board;
- Submission of the qualified physician's evaluation of the applicant's disability and physical limitations and all other application records;
- Payment of the applicable fee required under R12-4-102.

What privileges apply to the CHAMP?

In addition to the permitted activities to assist a mobility-impaired CHAMP holder listed under R12-4-217, a valid CHAMP holder may use any of the following during an archery-only season as prescribed in R12-4-318:

- A crossbow, as defined under R12-4-101, using a single bowstring, capable of firing only a single arrow or single bolt with each loading and cocking action, but with the following prohibitions on the use of a crossbow:
 - No use of magnifying scopes, magnifying red dots, or other magnifying optics. A 1x magnification is not considered a magnifying optic on any of these accessories. The use of illuminated reticles, illuminated sights or illuminated sight pins is also not prohibited.
 - Any attached accessories or built-in accessories are prohibited if they throw, cast, or project an artificial light or electronically alter or intensify a light source for the purpose of visibly enhancing an animal image or placing a point of aim on an animal.
 - These restrictions apply only to archery-only hunts. CHAMP hunters may continue to use a crossbow without these restrictions in any HAM, Muzzleloader, or General season.
- A valid CHAMP holder may use external structures or devices (e.g. tripod, bipod) to stabilize the crossbow when in use.
- A valid CHAMP holder may use any bow to be drawn and held with an assisting device or a pre-charged pneumatic weapon, as defined under R12-4-301, using arrows or bolts and capable of firing only a single arrow or bolt at a time.