

FRATERNAL TWINS:

.350 LEGEND AND .357 MAX



BELOW: .350 Legend target cartridge with a 124-grain bullet (left) next to .357 Max. hunting cartridge (right) with a 180-grain bullet.

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presses, which are way more efficient and cost-effective, so we can provide ammo at the best price possible. While not a motivating factor, an added benefit is that it requires handloaders to use bullets specifically made for this caliber. Existing .357-caliber pistol bullets are not optimized for the .350 Legend rifles and velocities — and will likely have less-than-ideal results.”

The .350 Legend is based off a .223/5.56 case, allowing for use of a standard .223 bolt face to make production easier for rifle manufacturers. The .357 Max. is based off of the .357 Magnum case. The .350 Legend is also a rimless cartridge that headspaces from the case mouth, while the .357 Max. is a rimmed cartridge. The maximum average pressures (MAP) and muzzle velocities are similar. Although all industry published .357 Max. loads do not exceed 40,000 psi, the original SAAMI MAP was set at 48,000, not far from the .350 Legend’s 55,000 psi MAP. Both calibers also have an effective range of 250 yards, depending upon the load used and are well-suited for medium- and deer-size game.

Known as Mr. .357 Max., Mike Bellm of Bellm T/C’s, gunsmith and an authority on the .357 Max. cartridge noted his findings. “My recommended [.357 Max.] loads run 180-grain bullets about 200 fps faster than the factory 180-grain published ballistics for the .350 Legend.” Another experiment yielded muzzle velocities from a 12-inch .357 Max. Contender near equal to Winchester’s published muzzle velocities in rifle barrels. “Bottom line of the .350 Legend — it is anemic compared to the potentials of the .357 Maximum, but the best thing since sliced bread for those who do not reload ... If you do reload and want full performance, the .350 Legend is THE choice for repeating rifles, but stick with .357 Maximum in the break-open guns like those by Thompson/Center, H&R (out of production), the Henry single-shot and Traditions rifles.”



In 2019, Winchester introduced the .350 Legend — a straight-wall cartridge that could be fired from an AR platform, making it legal for hunting in many Midwestern states. How new is the .350 Legend cartridge and what makes it so popular?

The .350 Legend is actually markedly similar to the .357 Maximum cartridge. Yes, you read that right. Maximum not magnum. This underappreciated cartridge has been neglected partially due to its history, as well as the fact that it is not readily available off the shelf. It is a favorite of reloaders, especially pistol shooters. The .357 Remington Maximum debuted in 1983 as a new cartridge offering for the Ruger Blackhawk single-action revolver.

The .357 Max. is essentially a stretched .357 Magnum case, 0.315 inch longer. The .357 Max. also has a larger case capacity, although both can use a 0.357- or 0.358-inch diameter bullet. (.357 Mag. cartridges can be fired through a .357 Max. barrel.)

The cartridge fell out of favor due to wear issues in revolvers. The barrel face next to the cylinder began eroding with the top strap flame cut. As a result, the cartridge gained negative press, although the real problem was that revolvers and the .357 Max. were a bad match. When fired through single-shot rifles and pistols, the round performed exceedingly well, making it a favorite of people in the

know. SAAMI no longer recognizes the .357 Max. cartridge, and only a few small-scale ammunition manufacturers produce it, leaving its popularity to handloaders.

Steinel Ammunition in Twinsburg, Ohio, is a premium manufacturer of self-defense, hunting and target ammunition, specializing in hard-to-find cartridges. Founder Andy Steinel noted that the .357 Max. is an ideal round for new shooters and hunters. “Its energy and recoil put it on a short list of ideal cartridges for steel targets and deer-size game. It rings steel with enough force to stay engaged for hours, and well-placed shots allow modern bullet technologies to produce clean and ethical kills.”

According to Winchester’s media relations manager Nathan Robinson, “The .350 Legend has a variety of differences compared to the .357 Maximum, and really is its own unique animal.”

For starters, the .357 Max. uses a .357/.358” diameter bullet, while the .350 Legend uses a 0.355”.

“We ended up landing on a bullet diameter of .355” for several reasons,” Robinson said. “The biggest one being that in order to reliably extract the spent case it benefits from a slight taper. In order to incorporate that taper we had to widen the base and reduce the width at the case mouth, which then feeds and extracts more smoothly. Going with .355” also allows us to use our 9mm bullet