

Norma headstamps with letter codes 1961-1991

by Morten Støen, August 2011.

This article is based on cartridge headstamps in my own collection and in the collection of fellow collector Trond Strømstad, Norway. Combined with quite extensive information given to me by Kenneth Skoglund and Steve Holmquist at Norma Precision AB back in 1998, a pretty complete picture can be given. Nevertheless, some details are still in the dark, which will be commented on in the text.

Background

In 1894, Norma Projektilfabrik A/S was founded in Oslo, Norway by the Enger brothers. The main goal was to produce projectiles for rifle shooters. To get into the Swedish market as well, a second factory was opened in Åmotfors, Sweden, in 1902. In 1911, a third factory was opened in Otterup, Denmark, under the name A/S Dansk Ammunitionsfabrik.

Today, the Swedish branch has become the famous Norma Precision AB (www.norma.cc), owned by RUAG Ammotech AG. The Norwegian Norma, which for a period operated as A/S NORMA-NITTEDAL (1979-1989), is now named NORMA AS (www.norma.as), and is merely a sales company in the hunting and outdoor field. They sold their shares in the Swedish company in 1975, and is now only connected to Norma Precision in that they are their Norwegian distributor. A/S Dansk Ammunitionsfabrik, Otterup, was closed in 1980, and the cartridge production was transferred to NORMA-NITTEDAL in Oslo. When NORMA-NITTEDAL closed down in 1989, production of the «Norwegian brand» Norma cartridges was transferred to Norma in Åmotfors. Hunting cartridges in calibers 6,5x55SE, .308 Winchester and .30-06 Springfield and target shooting cartridges in 6,5x55SE is still produced there with special «Norwegian» boxes. This is out of the scope for this article, though.

In all countries, target shooting with the 6,5x55 mm cartridge have been very popular ever since the introduction in 1894. As the cartridge case is the most expensive component in a cartridge, reloading of spent cases have been extensively done; both factory reloading and by the shooters themselves. In the first decades after World War II, the available cases were more or less worn down, with a quality problem as a result. This, combined with a growing competition from Svenska Metallverken and Raufoss, led to a restructure of the case situation in the beginning of the 1960's. This is where the letter codes comes in.

With a possible exception for small quantity test production in Oslo before World War II, neither the Oslo nor the Otterup factory have made their own cartridge cases, so all the cases in question have been produced in Sweden. Most of them, but not all, in Åmotfors, as will be commented on later. As a rule of thumb, cases headstamped **norma** are made for use by the Swedish factory, while cases headstamped **NORMA** are made for use by the factories in Oslo and Otterup. This will also be commented on later, but there are still some unsolved questions in this regard.

The headstamps and codes

The headstamps can be divided in five categories, which I have chosen to call Type 1-Type 5.

Type 1 and Type 2 (1962-1978)

Starting in 1962, the headstamp consists of a letter 8 o'clock indicating the supplier of the case metal, and a letter at 4 o'clock indicating the year of manufacture. In part of the period (1968-1973) cases were sub-contracted at Vulcans Tändsticksfabrik in Tidaholm (Amf 25)

and at Svenska Metallverken's factory in Blikstorp (Amf 35). The case producer is indicated by a letter at 6 o'clock.



Type 1

8 o'clock: Metal supplier
4 o'clock: Year of mfg.



Type 2

8 o'clock: Metal supplier
6 o'clock: Case producer
4 o'clock: Year of mfg.

8 o'clock – metal supplier

D = Vereinigte Deutsche Nickelwerke (VDN), Germany

M = Svenska Metallverken, Sweden, alloy 1070

S = Svenska Metallverken, Sweden, alloy 1072

V = Vereinigte Deutsche Metallwerke (VDM), Germany

6 o'clock – case producer

B = Blikstorp

T = Tidaholm

Brad Dixon, in «European Sporting Cartridges» Volume Two, page 253, also lists

O = Otterup and R = Raufoss. I can not exclude the possibility that those letters were assigned to Otterup and Raufoss, but no headstamp with any of those letters in the 6 o'clock position is known to exist. The «norma VRP» headstamp shown on page 252 must be a constructed one.

4 o'clock – year of manufacture

O = 1961*)	T = 1964	H = 1967	Z = 1970	I = 1973	X = 1976
P = 1962	U = 1965	L = 1968	E = 1971	K = 1974	D = 1977
S = 1963	V = 1966	A = 1969	R = 1972	N = 1975	G = 1978

*) Not known to exist on Type 1 or Type 2 cartridges.

Type 3 (1979-1991)

From 1979 to 1991, all cases were made at Norma, Åmotfors. Metal supplier and metal alloy seem to have been standardized, so the only letter left is the year code, which now was put in the 6 o'clock position.



Type 3

6 o'clock: Year of mfg.

O = 1979 and 1980	V = 1986
P = 1981	C = 1987
S = 1982	L = 1988
T = 1983 and until June 30 th , 1984	I = 1990
U = Aug. 6 th , 1984 and 1985	Z = 1991*)



Blikstorp?

A cartridge case with a «B» in the 6 o'clock position is known to exist. The Norma information states that «B» does not exist as a year code. One suggestion could be that this is a Blikstorp case (ref. Type 2), which for some reason didn't get any metal supplier- and year code.



From 1991

*) Norma information states that Z = 1991. No such case is known to exist. Norma also states that after 1991, the «regular» norma 6,5x55 headstamp was brought into use instead of the coded headstamp. So it is a possibility that the code Z was assigned, but never used.

Type 4 (1961-1975 for Norma, Oslo)

As a rule of thumb, cases made for Norma in Oslo were headstamped NORMA (capital letters).



Type 4

6 o'clock: Year of mfg.

The year codes are the same as for Type 1 and Type 2. Only the following codes are known to exist: O (1961), S (1963), N (1975). In my own article in the journal of the European Cartridge Research Association (ECRA 464-4), I also list an X code (1976). This was an error, actually a misunderstanding, and no such code on a Type 4 headstamp is known to exist.

In 1965, Norma Oslo and Raufoss formed the RANO organisation for sales of ammunition to the Norwegian rifle shooting movement. The RANO-headstamped cases were manufactured by Raufoss and loaded by Norma, and it seems natural that codes after 1965 is not likely to exist. So the N-code for 1975 is somewhat surprising on a Type 4 headstamp.

Though out of the scope for this article, it seems that cases for hunting ammunition delivered to Norma Oslo (from 1979 A/S Norma-Nittedal) did have «regular» Norma headstamps, rather than the coded headstamps discussed here. It is likely that the coded headstamps were only used on cases for target shooting.

Type 5 (1970-1976 for A/S Dansk Ammunitionsfabrik, Otterup)

Starting in 1970, cases for the Otterup factory were given a special headstamp, including the letters «DA» for A/S Dansk Ammunitionsfabrik. The first of them included the letter «O», later substituted by a number (1-5).



Type 5

DA O : 1970

DA 1 : 1971

DA 2 : 1972

DA 3 : 1973

DA 4 : 1975

DA 5 : 1976



The «O» is often interpreted as a «0» (zero). It may be an open question which interpretation is correct, but «O» has been a commonly used reload mark at Otterup, and is in my opinion most likely the correct.

Registered headstamps


The next page contains a listing of all headstamps of Types 1-5 I have been able to register. Notice that several of them have some shade of greyish color. This is a layer of tin coating which identified the new Silver line cartridges (Silver Torped, Silver Prick, Silver Match and Silver Reduc), introduced around 1955-1960.

Norma letter codes


☐ = brass case
 ☒ = tin coated brass case




B C I L O P S T U V
☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐



DH DP DV ME MI MK MN MR SA SD SG SH SL SP SS ST SU SX SZ VP VS VT
☐ ☐




MTI SBA SBE SBL SBZ
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐



DAO DA1 DA2 DA3 DA4

☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐



DA5

☐



N O S
☐ ☐ ☐
☒ ☒