

a “feel thing,” but you’ll pick up on it the first time you encounter anything in this next set of options. If the primer seats notably easier, look out. If the primer just slips right into place without much resistance, that load is completely over-pressure. If the case won’t hold a new primer in place, you’re lucky you weren’t hurt. Ostensibly, this is all a measure of case head expansion, but it is, in my estimation, the telling test for pressure.

Other indicators are displayed nearby, and don’t ignore any of them. Primer appearances are the first visual indicator I go with, and that’s because they are right there to see after each round fired. There are reasons (some) primer appearances are not always indicative of an overpressure load, but, that’s only if they *don’t* show. Lemmesplain. Small rifle primers, especially, don’t always demonstrate the well-known surface conditions that indicate too much pressure. Important: **If any of the surface conditions do show, that load is overpressure.** So one more time for clarity: **If there are no visual trace-marks of over-pressure appearances, that does in no way mean the load is not overpressure.** If there are footprints indicating excessive pressure, it does exist with no further qualification. Until you prove it wrong, assume that anything that indicates excessive pressure is indeed excessive pressure.

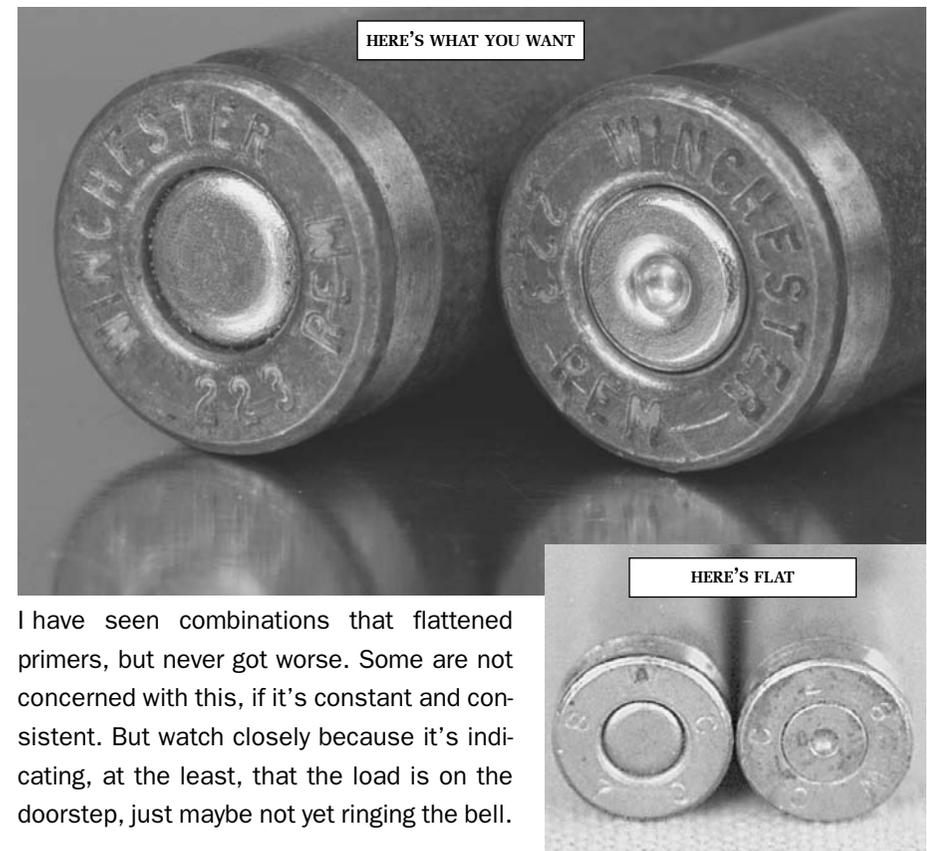
[Actually, even though this wasn’t intentional, I wasn’t perfectly honest with you. The very first clue is the velocity reading – an unexpectedly high velocity reading. This evaluation gets worked into a system for load workups coming in another chapter, but if a round leaves behind a reading 40 or 50 feet per second ahead of a goal (or ceiling) number, take a very close look at it. Despite what your mother might have told you, you are really not that special.]

PRIMER AREA

After collecting up a spent case, look at the primer. If you see any of the following, reconsider the propellant amount. Or don’t dare fire another from the same batch, depending on what you see.

These are given in rough order of severity, meaning from overpressure to more overpressure.

A within-limits load should leave a primer that still maintains a visible radius around on its edges. A flattened primer, which also appears larger diameter (because it’s flushed out within the pocket), shows excessive primer “flow.”



I have seen combinations that flattened primers, but never got worse. Some are not concerned with this, if it’s constant and consistent. But watch closely because it’s indicating, at the least, that the load is on the doorstep, just maybe not yet ringing the bell.

The surface of the primer face should have the same appearance as new, respecting the “sheen” of the metallic surface. I say it this way because not all start off shiny. If there are pits or dulling of the surface, it was more forcibly pushed back against the bolt face. Of course, that assumes the bolt face itself is smooth...

The firing pin indentation should be a radiused dimple. A “crater” (raised edge around the radius) likewise indicates excessive flow. This flow travelled around the firing pin tip and into the firing pin hole in the bolt face. Sometimes there will be a shallow, but more sharp-edged appearance to the indentation, often giving the appearance of the indentation turning “inside out.” And that’s exactly what it’s doing.

The next progression from the above is a pierce, which is a hole right in the middle. Then the firing pin hole in the bolt face acted as a cookie cutter when the