

Safe & Secure Firearm Storage

The Facts &
How You Can
Help

Safe Storage Saves Lives

Safely and securely storing firearms reduces the number of suicides by people of all ages, protects children from accidental shootings and prevents theft. Everyone living in a house where there is a gun is at greater risk for suicide than those living in a house without a gun. Firearms are the second-leading cause of death among Minnesota's teens and children. Stolen guns create a significant risk to public safety in Minnesota. More than 2,000 firearms were stolen from individuals (not gun stores) in Minnesota in 2020, according to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. Minnesota does not require firearms owners to report the loss or theft of a firearm so this is likely a significant underestimate. Stolen guns are often used in violent crimes, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Safely storing firearms means keeping them unloaded and locked in a locked cabinet, safe, gun vault or storage case. Ammunition should be stored in a separate locked container away from any firearms.

More than

500

Americans

die every year from unintentional shootings

Statistics to Know

- 42.8%** An estimated 42.8% of Minnesotans have at least one firearm in their home, according to a RAND Corporation long-term study tracking gun ownership in all 50 states, from 1980 to 2016, that was published in April 2020. However, more than half of gun owners do not store all of their guns responsibly.
- 77%** More than three-quarters (77%) of the annual deaths from firearms in Minnesota each year are suicides; the national average is 60%.
- 85%** In homes that keep firearms and ammunition safely stored away from each other, children and teens have an 85% lower risk of unintentional injuries or death compared to those that don't.

Know the Reality

Unlocked guns increase the risk of suicide. Safely storing guns can save a life by adding small barriers between suicidal impulse and action. If a person survives the short-term, acute crisis, that person will likely not die by suicide. People who are suicidal don't generally attempt suicide if safeguards are in place making their chosen method more difficult; they typically don't seek other ways, according to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs.

Other people, especially children, in your home know your hiding places. Just hiding a loaded firearm will not keep children or other people in your household from finding it. An estimated 5.4 million children in the United States live in homes with at least one unlocked and unloaded gun—and most children know where these guns are kept. About 3 in 4 children ages 5-14 with gun-owning parents know where firearms are stored and more than 1 in 5 have handled a gun in the home without their parents' knowledge.

Securely stored firearms and ammunition are easy for you to access quickly. A lockable case that is opened by using the owner's fingerprints can be opened in only half a second. Boxes that use RFID "smart" tags with chip technology also allow very quick access. Boxes opened with keys or a combination are less desirable because others can find the key or figure out the code. Also, you can securely store your firearms and ammunition quickly and easily.

How to Help

- For information about choosing and using secure in-home firearm storage materials, visit U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention at www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention.
- Everytown for Gun Safety funds the Be SMART campaign to raise awareness that secure gun storage can save children's lives. Be SMART emphasizes that it's the responsibility of adults to keep kids from accessing guns, and that every adult can play a role in keeping kids and communities safer. Visit www.besmartforkids.org for details.
- Project ChildSafe is a firearms safety education program developed by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the trade association for the firearms industry. Project ChildSafe provides free cable-style gun locks and safety instructions through law-enforcement agencies. Visit www.projectchildsafe.org for details.

