



FIREARMS SAFETY AND THE RISKS OF OWNING A FIREARM

FIREARM SAFETY

Firearm safety is the law in California. Every firearm owner should understand and follow firearm safety practices, have a basic familiarity with the operation and handling of their firearm, and be fully aware of the responsibility of firearm ownership.

It is a firearm owner's responsibility to take all possible steps to make sure all firearms are safely secured, especially from children. The overall abiding rule is to store your firearm in a safe and responsible manner at all times. As a firearm owner, you should be aware of the laws regarding children and firearms.

RISKS OF OWNING A FIREARM

Bringing firearms into the home can increase the risk of death to someone in the household by suicide, homicide, or unintentional injury due to firearm availability.

The Gun Violence in California Fact Sheet published by EVERYTOWN¹ indicates that:

- In an average year, 3,332 people die and 9,787 are wounded by guns in California. California has the 32nd-highest rate of gun violence in the U.S.
- An average of 1,610 people in California die by gun suicide every year — a rate of 3.8 suicides per 100,000 people.
- An average of 1,674 people in California die by gun homicide every year — a rate of 4.3 homicides per 100,000 people.
- Guns are the second-leading cause of death among children and teens in California. In California, an average of 272 children and teens die by guns every year, of which 21% of these deaths are suicides and 75% are homicides.
- In 2021, 45 women were fatally shot by an intimate partner in California. 49% of female intimate partner homicide victims were killed with a gun.
- California has the 45th-highest societal cost of gun violence in the U.S. at \$1,060 per resident each year. Gun violence costs California \$41.9 billion each year, of which \$1.1 billion is paid by taxpayers.

Other studies indicate that over one-half of accidental firearm injury deaths among children and adolescents happened at their home; most commonly when the child or adolescent was playing with or showing the firearm to another person. Overall, firearms used in unintentional injury deaths were

¹ https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/California_2024-October.pdf

often stored loaded (74%) and unlocked (76%) and were most commonly accessed from nightstands and other sleeping areas.

It is critical that firearms owners have a clear understanding and awareness of increased risk factors resulting from firearm ownership.

FIREARM OWNERSHIP

Firearms must be handled responsibly and stored securely to prevent access by children and other unauthorized users. California has strict laws pertaining to firearms, and you can be fined or imprisoned if you fail to comply with them. Do not store your firearm where it is visible.

Understanding the Safety Aspects of your Firearm:

- Get advice from a professional salesperson on the safety aspects of the firearm you are considering buying.
- Select the firearm that best suits your personal needs. Ask a lot of questions!
- Ask about the correct ammunition for the firearm you have selected.
- Become thoroughly familiar with the mechanics of the firearm you have selected. By knowing exactly how your firearm works, you are more likely to recognize any possible safety problems.
- An owner's manual from the manufacturer of your firearm should be provided to you when you buy a new firearm. Carefully read the manual and use it to familiarize yourself with the firearm and its operation.
- Enroll in a firearm training course.
- Maintenance is part of being a responsible firearms owner. Firearms should be cleaned regularly and especially after prolonged storage.
- You must recognize the need and be aware of the methods of childproofing your firearm, whether or not you have children.

Regardless of where you decide to keep a firearm, you must consider how to safely and securely store the firearm.

THE SIX BASIC FIREARM SAFETY RULES

There are six basic firearm safety rules for firearm owners to understand and practice at all times:

1. Treat all firearms as if they are loaded.
2. Keep the firearm pointed in the safest possible direction.
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.
4. Know your target, its surroundings, and beyond.
5. Know how to properly operate your firearm.
6. Store your firearm safely and securely to prevent unauthorized use.

The six basic safety rules are the foundational rules for firearm safety. However, there are additional safety points that must not be overlooked and can be found here: <https://oag.ca.gov/firearms/tips>

SUICIDE

It's a fact that every year many people experiencing depression, intoxication, substance abuse issues, or anger die by suicide using firearms, most commonly handguns.

The developmental issues associated with adolescence make teenagers particularly susceptible to suicide. Safe and responsible firearm storage, particularly when a member of the household is experiencing one of the aforementioned conditions can help prevent tragedies.

If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, please call the national suicide prevention lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

If you have any comments or suggestions regarding this pamphlet, please send them to:

Department of Justice
Bureau of Firearms / FSC Unit
P.O. Box 160367 Sacramento, CA 95816-0367

You can also visit our website at oag.ca.gov/firearms.

This pamphlet can be downloaded from the following websites:

<https://oag.ca.gov/firearms/fsc>
<https://oag.ca.gov/firearms/tips>
<https://oag.ca.gov/firearms/fscinfo>