

Gulfport Police Department

An Important Message to Parents About

GUN SAFETY

If your child sees a gun, he or she should

STOP!

DON'T TOUCH.

LEAVE THE AREA.

TELL AN ADULT.

We encourage you to reinforce these ideas by repeating this message and discussing it with your child. If your home is like half of those in our nation, your home has a gun. We encourage you as a responsible parent and citizen today to make sure all guns you may have cannot be reached by anyone who should not use them, especially children.

Keep your ammunition securely stored where a child or any other unauthorized person cannot reach it. Talk to your child about guns. Discuss their uses and history. Answer you child's questions honestly and openly. If you can't answer a question, contact a knowledgeable person for the answer. By removing the mystery surrounding guns, your child will be far less curious about guns, and more likely to follow safety rules.

Make sure your child understands the difference between a toy gun and a real gun, and the difference between "pretend" and real life. Cap guns, "laser" guns, and plastic squirt guns are toys. BB guns and firearms - such as pistols, rifles, and shotguns - are not toys. Explain to your young children that guns on television are not real, and are shown being used incorrectly.

If you allow your child to play with toy guns, use them to teach safe gun handling.

Basic Handgun Safety Information

Firearms ownership carries with it responsibility of safeguarding the welfare of others and yourself when handling firearms. Accident prevention is the user's responsibility. It is the responsibility of a gun owner to know what the law is pertaining to ownership, possession, transportation, and use of firearms.

It is advisable to have a serious discussion with family members concerning a handgun and stressing the danger of careless or unsafe use. A basic rule in handgun safety is to never assume that a handgun is unloaded. You should treat every handgun as if it were loaded.

A handgun should always be unloaded when not in use and the ammunition stored separately from the handgun. It is generally recommended that the cylinder assembly of a revolver and the barrel assembly of a semi-automatic be removed from the frame for long-term storage. Both ammunition and the firearm should be stored in a safe place out of the reach of children. Improper storage of a handgun at home could result in the arming of a criminal breaking into the home or the injury or death of a child who discovers the handgun and plays with it.

Discharging a handgun at a range without proper ear and eye protection could result in permanent damage to those senses.

For the safety of yourself and others, be sure the barrel is clear of any obstructions before shooting. Obstructions such as dirt, excess grease, or lubricating oil in the bore may cause increased pressures which could damage the handgun and cause injury.

On a semi-automatic handgun, you should keep the safety on and/or action open unless firing.

Never put your finger on the trigger until ready to fire at a proper target. A proper target is knowing what is beyond the target and in the line of fire.

You should always keep the barrel pointed in a safe direction, even when dry firing, loading or unloading. In the event of an accidental discharge, no injury can occur if the barrel is pointed in a safe direction.

Dropping a loaded handgun may cause an accidental discharge, even with the safety on.

Bullets can glance off many surfaces like rocks, the surface of water and other flat surfaces. Glancing bullets travel in unpredictable directions with considerable velocity capable of causing injury or death.

A license to carry a concealed weapon is required for carrying a concealed handgun, loaded or unloaded. *Note - Full time peace officers are not required to obtain a Concealed Weapons Permit. Carrying a concealed firearm without a permit is a felony and openly carrying a firearm may subject a person to misdemeanor charges.*

Even with a Concealed Weapons Permit federal, state and local government as well as some businesses may restrict carrying a weapon on certain premises. Airports, government offices including courts, prisons and jails, school property, and private enterprises such as those licensed to sell alcoholic beverages on premises are examples of areas where firearms may not be carried. Additionally it is unlawful to carry concealed

firearms in legislative or government meetings or sessions and to professional sporting events not related to firearms.

Alcoholic beverages and controlled substances should be avoided when using firearms. Possession and use of firearms while under the influence is unlawful and constitutes a reckless disregard for safety.

A person can be held criminally and civilly liable for wrongfully pointing or discharging a handgun at another person. This could result in trauma to yourself and your family, the loss of freedom, loss of employment, related wages and health benefits, and future wages and employment.

A person may be charged with a felony for culpable negligence if they allow a firearm to be stored in easy reach or access to minors and that access results in the injury of the minor or another person. In addition the child may be charged with a misdemeanor simply for possessing the firearm and with a felony if he or she uses the firearm to injure another person.

But, in all cases, civil or criminal liability pales when compared with the damage to individuals and the community where an innocent person is killed or injured due to the careless storage and use of a firearm. This is especially traumatic when the death or injury is a child.