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Southwest Center

FOR AGRICULTURAL HEALTH, INJURY PREVENTION, AND EDUCATION

Monthly Safety Blast

Produced by the Southwest Center for Agricultural Health, Injury Prevention and Education

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Gun Safety in Rural Areas

Guns are common in rural America. In fact, almost half of rural residents say they own a gun. Firearms are used for hunting, recreational shooting and for protecting rural workers from wild animals. Many times guns are sources of pride and nostalgia. They are passed down from generation to generation and cherished by their owners the same way someone might cherish a piece of heirloom jewelry.

However, a piece of jewelry is not likely to end a life. Gun owners have to take precautions to ensure that their firearms do not end up in the wrong hands. Shootings are second only to car accidents in the causes of fatal injuries in rural areas. Furthermore, people who own firearms and experience extreme stress need to recognize that they are at high risk for suicide. According to the CDC, 51% of all suicides are carried out using a firearm. Not only are firearms involved in a high rate of fatal injuries, but they can also cause non-fatal injuries including hearing and eye damage.



Image Source: Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press File

This is not a position article on whether or not people should own guns. Nor is it a political statement for gun reform. It is simply intended as a reminder for gun owners. If you own a firearm, it is your responsibility to protect your family and community from unintentional or intentional harm. Following these safety tips can help avoid tragedy.

1. Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction-away from people.
2. Unload firearms when not in use. Don't rely on your gun's 'safety.'
3. Clean and maintain guns regularly.
4. Be sure of your target AND what's beyond it.
5. Use the correct ammunition.
6. If the gun fails to fire when the trigger is pulled, handle with care!
7. Always wear eye and ear protection when shooting.
8. Keep firearms in a locked safe.
9. Talk to family members about gun safety.
10. Suicide gravely affects family left behind. Call the suicide prevention lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or text HOME to 741741 to talk to a trained professional.

Ultimately, gun safety is in the hands of the owner and users. Teach children to respect firearms and model safe gun ownership. Gun safety saves lives.

References:

- Key takeaways on American's view of guns and gun ownership: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/22/key-takeaways-on-americans-views-of-guns-and-gun-ownership/>
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- Firearms Safety-10 rules of safe gun handling: <https://www.nssf.org/safety/rules-firearms-safety/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2016 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December, 2017.

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