

PROGRESS IN SAFETY

Unintentional gun deaths have **dropped by over 50% in New Hampshire** over the last three decades!

NEW HAMPSHIRE FIREARM ACCIDENTS

	Deaths	Injuries treated in the Emergency Department
1983–1987	17	NA
2003–2007	7	193

Still, with one or two deaths a year—and about 40 injuries treated in New Hampshire emergency departments every year from firearm accidents—we can do better.

The first step is to follow the 11 commandments of gun safety. The newest rule addresses suicide prevention. Suicides far outnumber homicides in New Hampshire (annually about 150 suicides vs. 20 homicides). Firearms are the leading suicide method in our state (about half of all suicides, or 70–80 a year).

If a family member is going through a difficult period (like depression, a relationship break-up, or drug problem), make sure they can't get to your guns. To learn ways to get help for them, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to learn ways to help: 1-800-273-TALK [8255]**.

ABOUT THE COALITION



The New Hampshire Firearm Safety Coalition brings together individuals and organizations with a broad range of views on gun ownership who share

a concern with safety and with preventing suicide. The group includes: gun shops and firing ranges, legislators, injury prevention and mental health advocates, researchers and committed volunteers.

Since the Coalition first formed in 1994, the group has produced a variety of public education materials initially geared towards young people: a brochure and other printed materials, Firearm Safety Display Kits available for use at health fairs and educational programs, and two videos entitled "Staying Safe Around Guns – What You DON'T Know Can Hurt You" for middle and high school students. Since then, more than 4500 copies of these have been distributed throughout NH, the US and abroad.

In 2009, the Coalition took on *Suicide Prevention: A Role for Gun Shops and Ranges* – a collaborative effort to engage gun shop and range owners, their employees and their customers on preventing suicide, the number one type of firearm death in the U.S.

For more information visit our website
www.nhfsc.org



GUN SAFETY RULES

11 / 10 COMMANDMENTS OF GUN SAFETY

Look inside to see what's new!

SHOOTING A GUN

- 1. Seek proper instruction.** Attend a reputable firearms safety handling course or seek private instruction before attempting to use a firearm. Before handling a new gun, learn how it operates. This includes knowing its basic parts, how to safely open and close the action, and how to safely remove any ammunition if loaded. Remember, a firearm's mechanical safety device is never foolproof. The safety device can never replace safe firearm handling.
- 2. Wear eye and ear protection as appropriate.** Firearms are loud. They can also emit debris and hot gases that can cause injury. For these reasons, safety glasses and ear protectors are recommended.
- 3. Be sure your gun and ammunition are compatible.** Only cartridges or shells designed for a particular gun can be safely fired by that gun. Most guns have their cartridge or shell type stamped on the barrel. Ammunition can be identified by information printed on the box and stamped on each cartridge. Do not fire the gun if there is any question about the compatibility of the gun and ammunition.
- 4. Carry only one gauge/caliber of ammunition when shooting.** Smaller ammunition can be accidentally placed in a gun chamber

designed for larger ammunition, creating an obstruction and a very hazardous situation. Remove unfired ammunition from clothing when you are through shooting to avoid accidentally mixing different ammunition next time you go shooting.

- 5. Be sure of your target—and what's beyond.** Be absolutely sure you have identified your target without any doubt. Equally important, be aware of the area beyond your target. This means observing your prospective area of fire before you shoot. Never fire in a direction where there are people or any other potential for mishap. It's simple: *think first, shoot second*.
- 6. Don't mix alcohol or drugs with shooting.** Alcohol, as well as any other substance likely to impair mental or physical functions of the body, should not be used before or while handling firearms.

OWNING & HANDLING A GUN

- 7. Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.** There's a natural tendency to place your finger on the trigger when holding a gun. Avoid it! Your trigger finger should be extended, pointing forward, pressed against the side of the firearm, above the trigger area.
- 8. Keep the action open and the gun unloaded until ready to use.** Whenever you pick up any gun, immediately check the action and check to

see that the chamber is unloaded. If the gun has a magazine, make sure it is empty. Even if the magazine is empty or removed, a cartridge may still remain in the firing chamber. If you do not know how to open the gun's action, leave it alone or get help from someone who is knowledgeable.

- 9. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.** Whether you are shooting or simply handling your gun, never point the muzzle at yourself or at others. Common sense should dictate which direction is safest depending on your location and various other conditions. Generally speaking, it is safest to have the gun pointed upward or towards the ground.
- 10. Store your guns safely and securely when not in use.** Hiding guns where you think children or others will not find them is not enough. Always store your guns unloaded and locked in a case or gun safe when not in use, with ammunition locked and stored in a separate location.
- 11. Consider temporary off-site storage if a family member may be suicidal.** When there is an emotional crisis (like a break-up, job loss, legal trouble) or a major change in someone's behavior (like depression or anger, more drinking) that causes concern, storing guns outside the home until the situation improves may save a life. Friends, shooting clubs, police departments, and some firearms stores may provide storage services.