

What You May Not Know About Gun Safety

The Problem

- In the United States, about 100 children (through age 17) die each year from unintentional shootings.
- Almost five times as many children are wounded as a result of mishandling firearms.
- Most unintentional childhood shooting deaths have involved guns kept in the home that have been left loaded and accessible to children.
- Of the seven unintentional firearm deaths reviewed by Missouri Child Fatality Review Panels in 2008, four involved a gun that was owned by a family member, two by acquaintances and one by the decedent.
- All seven of the Missouri children who died as a result of unintentional firearm injury in 2007 were killed with a gun that was accessible to children or not locked or securely stored.
- Five of the seven Missouri children who died as a result of unintentional shootings were male and two were female.

What can parents do to keep their kids safe?

- Parents who own guns should always store firearms unloaded and lock them up. Ammunition should be locked in a separate location, out of the children's reach. Gun locks, load indicators, and other safety devices should be used on all firearms.
- Parents should teach their children the difference between a toy gun and real gun.
- When children see someone on television being killed; they need to be taught the difference between a television death and a "real life" death.
- Safety lessons that explain the rules for gun safety should be done openly with time for the child to ask questions.
- If a child is 11-years-old or older, and expresses an interest in hunting, enroll them in a Hunter Education Safety Course. Missouri mandates Hunter Education Programs for anyone born on or after January 1, 1967. Hunter Education Programs teach their participants how to handle firearms safely at home and while hunting. For more information, access the Missouri Department of Conservation's web site at <http://mdc.mo.gov/hunt/heclass-search.html>

If children see a gun:

(National Rifle Association, Eddie Eagle Program)

- Stop!
- Don't touch the gun.
- Leave the area where the gun is located.
- Go tell an adult about the gun.

The 10 Commandments of Gun Safety

(Missouri Department of Conservation)

- Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.
- Guns should be unloaded when not actually in use.
- Don't rely on the gun's "safety". Treat every gun as if it can fire at any time.
- Be sure of the target and what's beyond it.
- Use correct ammunition.
- If the gun fails to fire when the trigger is pulled, HANDLE WITH CARE. Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and get adult help.
- Always wear eye and ear protection when shooting.
- Be sure the barrel is clear of obstructions before shooting.
- Don't alter or modify the gun. Do have the gun serviced regularly.
- Learn the mechanical and handling characteristics of the firearm used. Do not use any firearm that you have not had adult instruction in handling.

Resources

- National Rifle Association, Gun Safety Rules: <http://www.nrahq.org/education/guide.asp>
- National Rifle Association, Eddie Eagle Gun Safety Program: <http://www.nrahq.org/safety/eddie/index.asp>
- Kid's Health, Gun Safety: http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/house/gun_safety.html
- Project Child Safe: <http://www.projectchildsafe.org/>