



Safe Gun Storage Protects Our Kids

By City Attorney Mara W. Elliott

Gun violence often begins at home.

Firearms are a leading cause of injury-related deaths among children, second only to motor vehicle injury deaths. Most of the 7,000 children killed and injured each year are shot in their own homes. Most of these deaths happen when a child is playing with a gun, mistakenly thinking it was a toy, or was unloaded or locked.

Studies show that 46 percent of gun owners with children at home do not secure their firearms. Among children 9 and under, 73 percent know the location of their parents' firearms, and 36 percent admit they've handled the weapons.

Protecting children from these horrific accidents is why I proposed the Safe Storage of Firearms Ordinance. It requires that firearms in a residence be stored in a locked container, or disabled by a trigger lock, unless they are carried on the body or are in the immediate control of an authorized user. Fifteen other California cities (including Los Angeles, San Jose, and San Francisco) have adopted Safe Storage Laws because studies show they are highly effective at saving lives.

The Safe Storage of Firearms Ordinance is easy to follow and does not infringe on a gunowner's rights to carry weapons or to use the weapon for self-defense. Firearms need not be locked if they are being carried by, or are within the immediate control of, a person who is legally authorized to use or possess the firearm.

Importantly, safe storage does not prevent quick access.

More than 1,700 devices are available to stop unauthorized users from accessing guns, and owners can choose one that best suits their needs. A biometric safe that uses fingerprint technology can be placed near a bed and opened within seconds -- as quickly as a nightstand drawer. Cable locks may be preferred by hunters who stow their rifles when it isn't hunting season.

Like other common-sense safety measures, such as seat belt laws and child-proof caps on prescription drug containers, safe storage practices prevent tragedies from occurring.

California's 1986 seat belt law illustrates how law-abiding citizens respond to a safety law. Before the law was enacted, only 20 percent of Californians wore seat belts, even though they were effective in saving lives. After the law was enacted, seatbelt use doubled. After 25 years, 96 percent of California motorists and passengers were wearing seatbelts, making all of us safer.

As a mother, and as your City Attorney, I want to make sure no one endures the heartbreak of an

(continued)

accidental shooting like the one that happened in my own community of Scripps Ranch a few years ago.

Lives were shattered when a 10-year-old boy found an unlocked gun in a friend's garage, a place known as a hangout for the neighborhood kids. The boy accidentally shot himself in the chest and died.

Scenarios like this one are all too familiar, which may be one of the reasons that even the National Rifle Association recommends the safe storage of firearms.

Common-sense precautions like safe storage can avert these tragedies and protect families from ever experiencing a devastating firearm-related loss. The Safe Storage of Firearms Ordinance will prevent life-altering accidental shootings by reminding gun owners that they are responsible for securely storing their guns for the protection of those around them.

For more information about available safe storage devices, please see the California State Attorney General's website: <https://oag.ca.gov/firearms/fsdcertlist>.

For additional information and tips on safe gun storage, visit: <http://besmartforkids.org/> or <http://askingsaveskids.org/>.

###

City Attorney Mara W. Elliott 1200
Third Ave., Suite 1620
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: 619-236-6220
Email: cityattorney@sandiego.gov
www.Sandiego.gov/cityattorney