



# San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott



## **Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home**

*New ordinance takes effect September 12, 2019*

The San Diego City Council approved a new ordinance on July 30, 2019, that requires San Diegans to safely store their firearms at home, whether in a safe or other locked box, or with a trigger lock.

Safe storage is the key to responsible gun ownership. San Diego City Attorney Mara Elliott introduced the ordinance as a way to reduce gun-related violence, suicides, accidental shootings by children, and thefts of firearms.

### ***What does this new rule require?***

Effective September 12, 2019, anyone who keeps any type of gun in their home, garage, or shed must keep it secured so that unauthorized users, such as children, family members with dementia, and those prohibited by law from possessing firearms, cannot access the weapon. The new law requires that loaded and unloaded firearms be stored in a locked container or disabled with a trigger lock.

### ***Why is it necessary?***

Studies have shown that 73 percent of children under 10 know where their parents' guns are stored, and 36 percent have actually handled them – even in homes where parents believe their children don't know where the gun is. Other data shows that suicide by gun is often an impulsive act, occurring within five minutes of the decision to do so. What's more, many crimes are committed with guns that have been stolen from their legal owners.

Evidence shows the presence of a gun in the home substantially increases the risk of suicide and accidental shootings, but those risks are lower in homes where the firearms are secured.

### ***How do I secure my gun?***

There are different types of lock boxes, gun safes, and trigger locks available for purchase from sporting goods stores, gun shops, and online retailers. An online search for “firearm safe storage” or “firearm locking devices” will show many options. The options include:

- Gun vaults or safes that can be opened with a key, a combination, an electronic lock code, with the owner's fingerprints, or with a Bluetooth app on your cell phone.
- Locked boxes, which are smaller than safes and can be portable, or securely attached to a floor or wall to prevent theft.
- Trigger locks that block the trigger of a firearm from being pulled; these can be opened with keys, a combination, or a fingerprint.

- Cable locks that block the chamber or barrel of a gun and prevent it from being fired; these are the least expensive option and can be opened with a combination lock or key.

The California Department of Justice's Bureau of Firearms has an interactive website that shows which types of safety devices will work with your firearm: <https://oag.ca.gov/firearms/roster/certified-firearms/search>

If you purchased your firearm in California any time after January 1, 2002, a firearms safety device was included, as required by state law.

Requests for a free gun lock can be made through It's Up To Us San Diego at <https://up2sd.org/request-to-receive-free-lock/>.

Alzheimer's San Diego provides free gun locks to residents whose family members are struggling with dementia. To receive one, call (858) 492-4400.

You can also inquire at any San Diego Police station about obtaining a free gun lock through Project ChildSafe.

### ***Are there exceptions?***

Yes. When in your residence you don't have to store your firearm in a locked container or disabled with a trigger lock if you are carrying it on your body, or it is within your immediate control so that you can readily retrieve and use the firearm.

### ***Will this new law keep me from retrieving my gun quickly in an emergency?***

No. Some firearm storage methods, such as locks that utilize biometric fingerprint scanning technology, allow access within seconds. With more than 1,700 different storage devices approved by the California Department of Justice, you can choose a method that best fits your needs.

### ***What if my gun is stolen?***

State law requires you to report the theft of a firearm within five days from the date you discover the loss. People reporting thefts will not be prosecuted for not complying with the safe storage ordinance.

### ***I have a gun I don't use but don't want to go to the trouble and expense of locking it up.***

Unwanted firearms can be turned over, unloaded, to the San Diego Police Department. Please call the nearest station for hours of operation before arriving: <https://www.sandiego.gov/police/contact>.

Enter the station without the firearm and advise the officer working behind the counter that you have a gun outside that you wish to turn in. The police officer will walk out with you and retrieve the firearm.