

Properly Storing a Firearm in the Home

What do you mean? Not only do I have to know how to use a firearm, but also need to store it properly? You've got to be kidding! Well, yes you do have to know how to store a firearm properly, and for a number of different reasons. One of the rules always taught in a Firearm Safety Course should be to "Always store your firearm so it is not accessible to unauthorized persons."

What do you consider to be an unauthorized person? Some people will think it's their children. Some people might think it's their elderly parents and yes, some people might think it's their spouses. Some people might think it's someone who is not properly trained in the use and safe handling of a firearm. All of the previously mentioned people are good answers. If we were to try to create a more generic or global choice, the answer would be that an unauthorized person is anyone who you don't want to have access to your firearm.

It's Your Firearm

Why might that be? You are responsible for your firearm, no matter who is allowed to use it. If you don't properly store a firearm, someone you care about might gain access to the firearm and hurt himself or herself or someone else. How many times have we heard about a young child finding an unsecured loaded handgun in a nightstand drawer or in a closet? How many times have you heard about a child getting suspended from school because they brought a firearm to school? How many times do we need to hear about a child getting killed because they found a loaded firearm? All you need to do is search Gun Accidents on the Internet. People need to be responsible with their firearms.

With great power comes great responsibility.

One of the sayings I always use during the classes I teach is "With great power comes great responsibility." I borrowed that line from Toby McGuire in the Spiderman Movies because it is so applicable. What do you think a firearm is: A play toy? The firearm is just like a piece of construction equipment, a car or truck, your kitchen carving knife, drugs in your home medicine cabinet or

cleaning supplies in your home. It can take a life if you're not careful and guess what? It's your firearm registered in your name if you are a law-abiding citizen! Again I tell you that people need to be responsible with their firearms. It's the lack of being responsible that causes us to read about news events related to firearms.

Tamper Resistant Mechanical Locking Devices

Many people use a tamper resistant locking device like a trigger lock, cable lock or mogul that encases the trigger assembly. Trigger locks come in either key or combination options.



You'll notice that the trigger lock is flat on one side and round on the other. You'll also note that the trigger lock has a serrated post that is off center with a receiving end to catch the post and lock it in place. This is to allow the trigger lock to be generic in nature and fit securely on as many firearms as possible.



You should never use a trigger lock on a loaded firearm since the firearm might discharge when you attempt to remove the trigger lock. Another reason is if you didn't place the trigger lock securely on the trigger. If you place the lock on the trigger, but the lock can move, it might be possible for someone to pull the lock assembly into the trigger and discharge the firearm. Obviously this is not a good thing, so that's why you always want to

use the trigger lock on an unloaded firearm.

Cable locks differ in length and size and are keyed. The firearm that you are trying to use it on may be unique in nature and may be able to be used with one cable lock or not another. You can use cable locks on most handguns and rifles. An important factor is to ensure that the locked cable lock can't be removed if you are able to disassemble the firearm. This many times is the case with fixed barrel semi automatics when the slide does not encompass the entire top of the firearm as it does with a floating barrel semi automatic.



Mogul Life Jacket locks are constructed of a strong, durable polycarbonate with a soft padded interior, solid steel double-pinned hinge, and a steel reinforced perimeter that totally encases the action of your firearm. They are available for rifles and handguns.



Can your gun be stolen?

Another reason to properly store a firearm is to prevent the theft of the firearm. Just because you use a cable lock or trigger lock doesn't make the firearm theft proof. We all hear about how we hear that stolen guns were used in a homicide or armed robbery. Well, someone had to make the guns

Keeping You Safe

Properly Storing a Firearm in the Home - Continued

available to be stolen. Most of the times, it's an individual and not a Gun Dealer. Gun dealer security is usually pretty good; almost like Fort Knox so the risk of having a firearm stolen from them is slim to none.

Locking Storage Containers

People will use different types of locking containers to secure their firearms. The appropriate container to be used would be determined by the number of firearms needing to be secured and if firearms need to be retrieved quickly for personal protection.

A locking pistol safe would be the appropriate locking container to use if you needed quick retrieval of your firearm for personal protection in the home. These containers can usually be bolted down to a flat surface, either horizontal or vertical. They can also be used in the trunk of your vehicle to secure the firearm.



Some of the locking containers open with a door to the front. Others open toward the top with the firearm being accessed in a drawer.



The location of the locking container needs to be considered since a locking container with a drawer that opens up to the top would not necessarily be a good fit between shelves if there is not a lot of space between the shelves. The locking container that opens to the front might be the best fit for that situation. Likewise, the locking container with the drawer that opens up might be the best fit for a location in

your trunk since you'll have easier access.

Firearms should always be kept unloaded until they are ready to be used unless you are going to use it for personal protection.

Properly storing a number of firearms with a good amount of protection can be obtained by using an actual gun vault. Gun Vaults range in size and weight and can be bolted down to any floor, including concrete. These gun vaults are fireproof, made of thick steel, and can be used to store other valuables. They have large bolts that come out of the door on all four sides of the door that lock the door in place when the handle is turned so that the door locks. The combination locks are usually dial in nature, like the pad locks we all had in school, but can be purchased with optional electronic digital locks. These are sometimes easier to open since you're punching in your electronic combination instead of turning the dial a number of times.



Gun cabinets are also used to store firearms, but they are not as tamper

resistant as a gun vault. These are sometimes made with out of sheet metal, like the metal file cabinet or of wood, usually with a glass window so that you can see the firearms through the glass. The sheet metal gun cabinets can usually be bolted to the floor or a wall, but the wood ones are usually freestanding. The other unwanted trait of the wood gun cabinet is that the glass can be broken by someone who really wants a gun and the gun retrieved that much easier than the sheet metal gun cabinet. The glass window is great for show, but terrible for theft resistance.



If you have state statutes requiring the safe storage of firearms, you want to take it very seriously. This applies whether you are home or not. Let me tell you something that happened to me.

Keeping You Safe

Properly Storing a Firearm in the Home – Continued

I was the only one home today working around the house while my wife took the kids on a field trip. I needed something at Lowe's (like the Home Depot) so I locked my home and left. I came back 45 minutes later to find a local Police Officer in my driveway. All types of things were racing through my mind. "Did something happen to my wife and kids? Did they get into an accident?" I quickly thought to myself, "No, that can't be."

If an accident did occur, then a State Trooper would have been in the driveway and not a local Police Officer. So then I thought, "Well, did I upset a neighbor?" Again, I quickly thought to myself, "No, that can't be." So what the heck was that local Police Officer there for?

As I parked my car and approached the police officer, he got out of the car and said "Mr. Burchman?" Needless to say, there were a lot of things running through my head at that time. I asked if I could help him. He proceeded to tell me that a 911 call originated from my home.

Just about then, the local Fire Department Rescue Truck showed up with an ambulance in tow, light bars flashing and sirens wailing. The Police Officer was glad I came home because he was just getting ready to break into my home and find the 911 Emergency. He had done an exterior perimeter search of my home and found no open access to the home and couldn't see in with the blinds shut.

I proceeded to tell the Police Officer that no one was home, or at least no one should have been home unless my wife and kids returned while I was out. We went in to the house to see if anyone was there and true to my word, no one was. He asked if I had a computer, because sometimes the computer would malfunction or be hacked and initiate a 911 call. I said I had a computer, but it was off. He asked me to check and confirm that they were. I went to where the computer was and returned to validate that the computer was in fact off. I

asked him to confirm that a call was made from my number. He called dispatch on his radio and I heard that it was for myself. Then he asked me to check if a phone was off of the hook because sometimes phones off the hook or crossed phone lines will generate an open call that is interpreted as a 911 call. I told the Police Officer that Verizon was in a few weeks earlier looking for a problem with a hum in my line and they couldn't find it since it was an intermittent problem.

So I asked the Police Officer to see if the 911 call was a voice report or just an open line. The dispatcher indicated that it was just an open line with no voice. So I then checked my line and guess what? There was no dial tone, just a hum. I let the Police Officer hear it for himself since I didn't want to be charged with a false 911 call. The Police Officer proceeded to tell me that although this is the first time this happened to me, this isn't the first time this has happened to many Police Departments, so I shouldn't feel bad. Crossed phone lines whether in the home or on the street can cause the hum or call initiation. After he left, I called Verizon from my cell phone, explained what happened, and was told that it happens quite a lot. As a matter of fact, mine was the 5th call of that type that the repair supervisor handled today.

Just think. If I didn't get home when I did, the Police Officer would have broken into my home for a false alarm. He would have looked around, and I mean all around looking for something or someone who could have made the call, probably even in closets! Lucky for me, I store my firearms correctly and I got home in the nick of time or else I would have had some more home repairs to do at my expense, and I didn't even cause the problem!

Just think, this event added a whole new spin on fire, medical or fire emergencies and when someone might enter a firearms owner's home, whether you're home or not! All the more reason for firearm's owners to store their

firearms in accordance with Massachusetts State Regulations!

Limit Access to your Secured Firearms

It's so crucial that you store your firearms so that unauthorized persons can't get them and to prevent their theft. Let me ask you a pointed and maybe uncomfortable question: How would you feel if one of your firearms was used to cause a statistic? You must limit the access to your firearms only to those you would trust with your life, since the firearm can take a life. Legally possessed firearms should be registered in your name and you need to be the person responsible for them.

Unless you really know what goes on in the mind of your spouse, son, or daughter you might or might not let them have access to your firearms. There are some gun related incidents such as the one in Red Lake, Minnesota where a teen took a firearm from his grandfather, who I believe was a retired police chief, and he killed his grandfather, his girlfriend, 5 students, a teacher and a security guard before killing himself. Surely the grandfather secured his firearm appropriately or so one would think. Assuming he did, how did his grandson gain access to the firearm used in the homicides? No one knows for sure, but do you want you or someone you care about to be a statistic?

Make a difference. Be and stay responsible for your firearm.

Remember, with great power comes great responsibility.

About the author: Mike Burchman is a Massachusetts State Certified Firearms Instructor and NRA Certified Instructor and Range Safety Officer. If you're a Massachusetts Resident and would like more information on firearms safety courses or instructions on how to use a firearm, please contact Mike Burchman at 508-361-4554 or visit www.homegunsafety.com.