

Firearms

Safety

for

Responsible

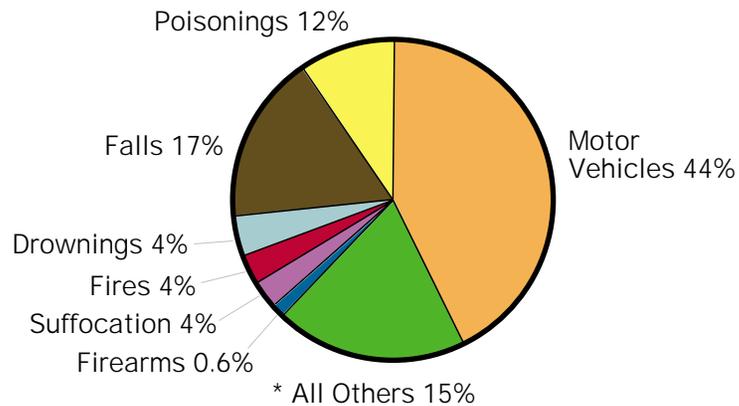
Citizens



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"Arms Makers For Responsible Citizens"

In 2000, the total number of accidental (unintentional) injury deaths in the United States was 97,300. Of these, 600 (0.6%) involved guns.



ACCIDENTAL DEATHS (ALL) - 2000

Source: National Safety Council "Injury Facts" (2001)

* "All Others" includes unintentional injury deaths resulting from animal bites, weather, falling objects, machinery, electrocution, etc.

WE CAN ALL AGREE ABOUT FIREARMS SAFETY 1

In the ongoing debate regarding firearms ownership, firearms safety should be one topic in which a consensus can be reached. No one wants to see a single person injured in a needless accident. However, sensationalistic rhetoric often interferes with implementation of additional measures to help further reduce the already historic low numbers of firearms accidents.

The purpose of this booklet is to cut through some of the myths, distortions, and fears that exist concerning firearms safety. It is hoped that, as an industry leader in firearms safety efforts throughout the last five decades, Sturm, Ruger can assist in reasoned and sensible public discourse regarding this most important topic.

FIREARMS SAFETY THROUGHOUT THE 20TH CENTURY

In 1903, the National Safety Council began keeping records concerning the number of accidental firearm deaths. They recorded 2,500 such deaths out of a population that then numbered some 80,632,000 Americans. In a largely rural nation, most of the population had at least some experience with firearms, but few had formal training in their use until the World War I draft began in 1917.

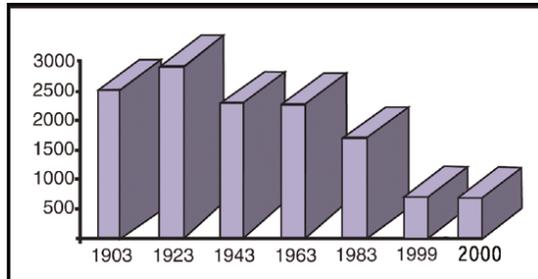
In 1926, the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (SAAMI) was founded at the request of Congress to address the role firearms standardization played in national security. As part of that effort, during the late 1920's, the major firearms and ammunition manufacturers agreed upon standardization of ten basic safety rules -- "**The Ten Commandments of Firearms Safety**" -- which have been taught to countless millions of shooters and which continue in various formats to the present day. They include:

1. Learn the mechanical and handling characteristics of the firearms you are using.
2. Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction, finger off the trigger unless actually firing.
3. Firearms should be unloaded when not in use, and stored securely to prevent unwanted access.
4. Be sure the barrel is clear of obstructions before shooting.
5. Be sure of your target before you shoot.
6. Wear shooting glasses and hearing protection when you shoot.
7. Never climb a tree or fence or do anything awkward with a loaded firearm.
8. Don't shoot at a hard surface or at water.
9. Never transport a loaded firearm.
10. Avoid alcoholic beverages and drugs when shooting.

World War II introduced many millions of citizens to formal firearms instruction, and many ex-GI's kept their interest in firearms when they returned to civilian pursuits. In 1948, New York became the first state to require hunter safety education training as a prerequisite to obtaining a hunting license; a practice since followed by all 50 states. Volunteers from groups of shooting enthusiasts such as the National Rifle Association, the Hunter Education Association, and the International Association of Hunter Safety Coordinators, working with the firearms industry and state fish and game departments, have since devoted countless hours to instruct novice shooters on the basic rules of firearms safety. Other outdoor-oriented groups such as Scouting, 4-H, Jaycees, and local gun clubs have made such safety training universally available.

AN "EPIDEMIC" OF INCREASED GUN SAFETY

The result of these voluntary efforts has been a dramatic **drop** in firearms accidents throughout the last century. The past 25-years have seen a particularly steep decline in fatal gun accidents to approximately 600 in 2000, despite dramatic increases in both the population and the number of firearms in existence. In fact, the accidental firearms deaths rate (per 100,000 people) in the United States has dropped 67% in the last 10 years. Consider the following table in light of over 240 million firearms presently owned and used by over 70 million persons, representing approximately half the households in the United States.



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• *Accidental firearms fatalities 1903 - 2000*

Source: National Safety Council "Injury Facts" (2001)

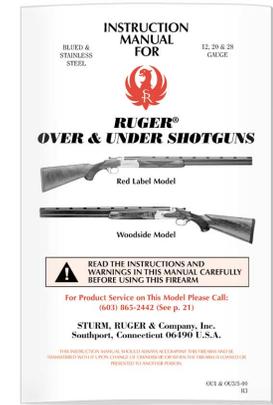
Firearms safety has been and is being successfully addressed; so much so that **accidental firearms deaths have been reduced to less than 1% of all accidental deaths in this nation.** Their number continues to drop. Many states now report few or even no fatal firearms accidents during the course of a typical year. But, of course, efforts to promote shooter education, awareness, and responsibility will continue to help reduce accidents even further.

Another remarkable aspect of the rapidly decreasing number of firearms accidents is how public perception is so much to the contrary. Widely-publicized criminal shootings have been lumped together with suicides and accidents to give a dramatically distorted picture of a claimed "gun **safety** problem." The fact is that suicides and homicides, in that order, comprise 98% of firearms deaths; accidents account for only 2% of all firearms deaths. Of course, any needless death is a tragedy, but correct responses to any perceived problem need to start with an understanding of the situation to be addressed. Intentional shootings are not caused by lack of safety devices.

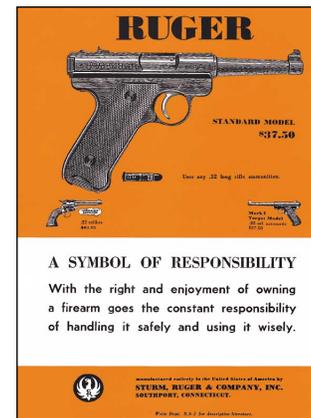
WHAT RUGER HAS DONE TO HELP PREVENT FIREARMS ACCIDENTS

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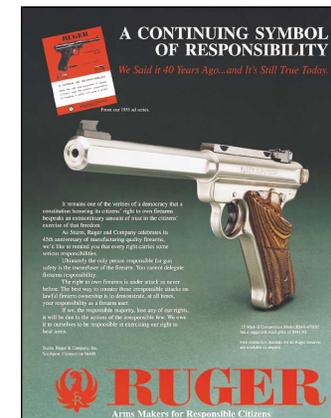
Sturm, Ruger & Company, the largest United States firearms manufacturer, was founded in 1949 by firearms enthusiasts William B. Ruger and Alexander Sturm to produce high-quality firearms for the sportsmen of America. Since 1949, a comprehensive instruction manual, which gives Ruger owners appropriate instructions and safety warnings concerning the proper use of their firearms, has been included with every gun we sold. In 1955, Ruger pioneered the practice of running full-page safety messages in the most popular firearms magazines, a practice which continues to this day.



Ruger Manual



1955 Ruger Safety Ad



1995 Ruger Safety Ad

...the most well-known of which is our ongoing *free* factory safety retrofit for “old model” (pre-1973) Ruger Single Action revolvers, first announced in 1981, which is by all accounts one of the most extensive product safety programs in firearms history. 8



**1981
Ruger Safety Conversion Ad**



**2000
Ruger Safety Conversion Ad**

Beginning in 1977, Ruger was the first firearm manufacturer to directly imprint a safety message to “read warnings in the instruction manuals available free on request” into the steel of its guns, a practice since emulated by many other firearms companies.



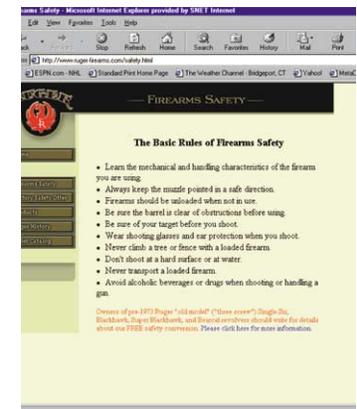
Ruger Firearm With Safety Rollmark

For more than 20 years, Ruger product advertisements have included a reminder that we would send any Ruger owner a free instruction manual if theirs had been lost or misplaced. Ruger product catalogs and dealer mailings have contained various product safety messages for many years. These are often used at point of retail sale to impart safety information to consumers. We want Ruger owners to understand how to safely and responsibly own, use, and store their Ruger firearms.

As the computer age dawned, we began posting safety messages on our website (www.ruger.com) and on other websites of interest to firearms owners. We have also run firearms safety messages on television (including the popular ESPN Sports Network) and radio.



Safety Rules on Ruger Website



More recently, we worked with the Injury Prevention Center of the Dartmouth Medical School and the New Hampshire Firearms Safety Coalition to underwrite, create, and distribute a firearms safety videotape for teenagers, schools, and supervised youth groups.



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NHFSC Safety Video

We also published and reprinted a safety message for beginning shooters. We intend to continue production of innovative gun safety programs in the future. Education helps save lives.



Ruger Safety Reprint

SAFETY FOR OUR CUSTOMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

As the leading American firearms manufacturer, we design and build our products with shooter safety in mind. They all incorporate various internal and external mechanisms appropriate to the type of firearm and the uses to which they will be put. While no mechanical safety device can absolutely prevent all accidents caused by careless or reckless mishandling of any firearm, it is significant to note that Ruger accident claims have decreased at a rate even more dramatic than the national rate -- an 88% decrease since 1979.

No Ruger firearm produced since 1973 has ever been found by any court or jury to be “defective,” “unreasonably dangerous,” or lacking any instructions or safety warnings. Many of our safety mechanisms are patented. We have even licensed some of our safety designs to other firearms companies for their use in helping to prevent firearms accidents.

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In 1987, long before politicians and others claimed safety locks as their own initiative, we voluntarily pioneered the safety practice of shipping our pistols in lock boxes with a padlock, which we thereafter expanded across our entire pistol and revolver line. In 1998, we began shipping a safety cable lock with all our rifles and shotguns. Beginning in 2001, newer cable locks are shipped with all firearms and we have offered to exchange those newer cable locks for our older padlocks and cable locks. Not one child has been reported injured as a result of the discharge of a Ruger firearm which had been properly stored in its lock box or with its accompanying cable lock.



Ruger Lock Box



Ruger Cable Lock

Lock boxes and cable locks employ precisely the same approaches to child safety as child-resistant aspirin containers. They avoid encumbering the gun mechanisms with potentially unreliable or unsafe additions. Devices such as “trigger locks”

have been touted by some as safety panaceas. Yet trigger locks can actually be used to fire loaded guns, and this dangerous possibility is rarely commented upon by technically unsophisticated media. 12

Despite good intentions and their ability to deter some inadvertent access, especially by young children, overselling the merits of gun locks must be avoided. No lock can ever absolutely prevent access by a determined individual, given sufficient time, tools, and strength. Personal responsibility in securely storing unloaded guns away from access by children or unauthorized adults is the real key to child safety. The long-standing, common sense safety rules must still apply.

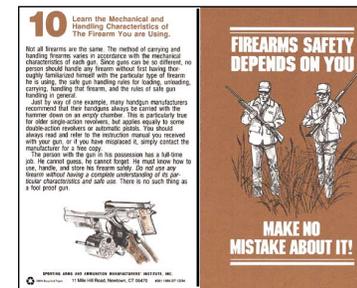
So called “smart guns” which rely upon battery power to activate some sort of “safety mechanism” have not been developed to be safe, reliable, or commercially feasible. Even one of the most extreme gun control groups has called so-called “smart guns” a “dumb idea.” The United States Government’s Sandia Laboratories stated that development of such devices, even for law enforcement use, is a “very difficult task” with acceptable systems perhaps being generations away. Even then, batteries *will* fail, often at the worst possible time. The gun designer is then faced with an unacceptable Hobson’s choice: when the batteries fail, will the gun or its safety mechanism become inoperative? Neither is an acceptable alternative because either can cost lives.

Discussions about such unproven devices cloud the fact that all guns can be mechanically locked up *today* with a variety of widely available devices. As we have long said, there is no such thing as a foolproof gun; and there is no substitute for personal responsibility and common sense in the handling, use, and storage of firearms.

CONTRIBUTION TO FIREARMS INDUSTRY SAFETY PROGRAMS 13

Sturm, Ruger has been an active member of the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute and the National Shooting Sports Foundation since 1969. During that time, we participated in writing one of the most widely distributed firearms safety booklets in history -- “Firearms Safety Depends On You - Make No Mistake About It!” Over 15 million copies of this booklet have been distributed since 1979, and it has formed the basis for a series of safety posters and TV/radio safety spots.

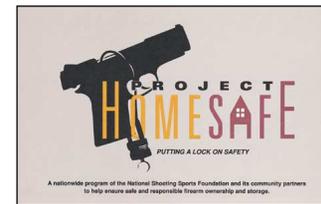
More recently, we have been a participant in NSSF’s “Project HomeSafe” which, in cooperation with law enforcement and various mayors, distributes free cable locks and safety educational materials to inner-city gun owners, who might not be exposed to gun safety messages which appear frequently in traditional outdoor and sporting media.



SAAMI Safety Booklet



SAAMI Safety Poster



Free Gun Lock Offer

WHY ARE WE TELLING YOU THIS?

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In recent years, to advance political agendas, it has been fashionable to demonize the legitimate firearms industry. Using emotional rhetoric which ignores both fact and common sense, safety conscious companies such as Sturm, Ruger are accused of knowingly producing unsafe guns. Erroneous “statistics” are often used and then repeated without concern for accuracy. For example, we have often heard the “statistic” that “13 children are killed each day in gun accidents.” This is as wrong as it is inflammatory, designed to prey on the strong protective instinct we all feel for children. It is wrong because: 1) it includes homicides and suicides - not just accidents; and 2) it requires persons old enough to have served a full tour in the armed forces to be characterized as “children.” In actuality, children’s firearms accidents are, thankfully, extremely rare events. No one likes to see any accident. But a homicide is not an “accident”, and a 21 year old criminal is not a “child.”

Perhaps more importantly, such rhetoric clouds determination of the correct policy decisions which should be made to address these different situations. Requiring additional gun safety measures aimed at preventing accidents cannot stop intentional misuse of guns by criminals. “Personalized guns” will not in the main, even if proven feasible after long periods of study, stop firearms suicides which generally occur with older gun owners utilizing their own firearms. Making guns less reliable and perhaps less safe for their intended users, in the name of lowering the accident rate even further, is not wanted by our customers and is unsound social policy.

But the true gun safety issue can, has been, and will continue to be successfully addressed. A century of success has proven this

to be true. Responsible manufacturers designing and building quality firearms with reliable mechanisms and proven safety systems which provide adequate safety, together with widespread safety education programs and responsible gun ownership, will continue to make a safe activity even safer.

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WHAT CAN WE ALL DO TO HELP INCREASE FIREARMS SAFETY?

• **TONE DOWN THE RHETORIC**

It does no good to play politics with firearms safety. The fact is that there are many programs in place which are demonstrably effective, and everyone should keep an open mind about innovative firearms safety efforts that can help decrease accidents even further. As we said at the outset, nobody wants to see any gun accidents; and it’s time that zealous advocates recognize our sincerity and stop exacerbating public fears and mistrust of genuine accident prevention efforts. Demonizing responsible gun ownership is counterproductive and pointless. Let’s leave politics at the door.

• **WORK TOGETHER FOR GUN SAFETY**

It is amazing how much can be accomplished when we close ranks and work together. Groups such as the New Hampshire Firearms Safety Coalition (comprised of concerned citizens with pro-gun and anti-gun feelings, safety professionals, physicians, manufacturers, and others) and the NSSF’s “Project Homesafe” (which partners industry, law enforcement, and mayors) constructively address increased gun safety programs, showing quite dramatically how erstwhile “enemies” can and should join together for the common good.

- **SUPPORT PROGRAMS THAT TRULY HELP PREVENT FIREARMS ACCIDENTS**

Gun locks of all kinds help save lives when used correctly and appropriately. While not a universal panacea, they are also not worthless, as some have claimed. Similarly, gun safety education programs and hunter safety courses do prevent accidents. To oppose such programs because they expose people to firearms and appropriate gun safety precautions is dangerous and short-sighted. Trying to frighten people about firearms in the name of “safety” does not work. We must recognize that guns are part of our society and firearms safety demands education, not ignorance. Let’s focus on what works, not what makes a good “sound bite.”

- **SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT FIREARMS SAFETY**

All those who manufacture, sell, own, and use firearms have serious responsibilities to all those with whom they have contact to spread the word about gun safety, and to stop unsafe gun handling and storage practices whenever they see them. We must help educate those who may not know or understand the basic, common sense gun safety rules that they must constantly practice safety 100% of the time they are around firearms. Young persons and new shooters must also be exposed to firearms safety efforts, from the “Stop - Don’t Touch - Leave - Tell An Adult” programs taught to juveniles, through more conventional gun safety programs taught by thousands of instructors nationwide in virtually every community in the land. We must publicize the availability of such

effective gun safety programs, so that everyone who might come into contact with firearms knows the basic safety rules. When these simple rules are followed, there are no accidents; which is precisely what all of us want -- responsible firearms ownership.

For in the final analysis, the ultimate safety system must be the firearms owner. It is reckless and extremely misleading to rely on any mechanical device to render “completely safe” and “child-proof” something as obviously dangerous as a loaded firearm. A gun is itself a warning that the owner must always exercise the utmost care in its ownership, storage, and use. Coming full circle, we close with the words of our 1955 “A Symbol of Responsibility” advertisement, as true today as when first stated over 45 years ago:

“With the right and enjoyment of owning a firearm comes the constant responsibility of handling it safely and using it wisely.”



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— **Arms Makers For Responsible Citizens** —

Free instruction manuals for all Ruger® firearms, which contain important operational information and safety warnings, are available from us on request. Please specify model.

Copies of all Ruger safety materials shown in this booklet are also available to individuals or organizations interested in promoting firearms safety. Please contact us with the quantities you require.