

~ Tennessee ~

Accidental Firearm Injuries and Deaths

Year	Deaths	Injuries treated in ER
2011	31	776
2012	24	861
2013	19	820
2014	5	850
2015	30	1,182

Suicides Involving Firearms

Year	Total suicide deaths	Suicides involving firearms	Percent of total
2011	938	580	61.8%
2012	956	620	64.9%
2013	1,017	674	64.4%
2014	945	595	63.0%
2015	1,065	638	59.9%
Total	4,921	3,107	63.1%

\*Source: Tennessee Department of Health, 2016.

Most firearm accidents and suicides can be prevented. As any gun expert knows, what you don't know about guns can hurt you. This pamphlet is part of a statewide effort to educate people who own, use, sell, and rent firearms about how to handle them safely.

It's also part of an effort to prevent suicides involving guns. If you notice that a family member is going through a difficult period—suffering from depression, a relationship break-up, a drug problem, etc.—make sure the person does not have access to guns. To learn ways to get help for them, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).



The Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN) is the statewide public-private organization responsible for implementing the Tennessee Strategy for Suicide Prevention as defined by the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.

TSPN is a non-partisan, non-profit network that works across the state to eliminate the stigma of suicide and educate communities about the warning signs of suicide, with the ultimate intention of reducing suicide rates in the state of Tennessee.

This pamphlet is part of a statewide gun safety program intended to prevent suicides involving guns. It brings together gun shops, firing ranges, gun enthusiasts, legislators, advocates, and researchers in injury prevention and mental health to raise public awareness about gun safety and its role in suicide prevention. It is based on a highly successful public awareness campaign by the New Hampshire Firearm Safety Coalition.

More information about this project is available via our website ([www.tspn.org](http://www.tspn.org)) or from the central office at [tspn@tspn.org](mailto:tspn@tspn.org) or (615) 297-1077.

For more information, visit our website:  
[www.tspn.org](http://www.tspn.org)



# GUN SAFETY RULES

11 ~~10~~ COMMANDMENTS OF GUN SAFETY

Look inside to see what's new!

## SHOOTING A GUN

- 1. Seek proper instruction.** Attend a reputable firearms safety handling course or seek private instruction before attempting to use a firearm. Before handling a new gun, learn how it operates. This includes knowing its basic parts, how to open and close the action, and how to remove any ammunition if the gun is loaded. Remember, a firearm's mechanical safety device is never foolproof. The safety device can never replace safe firearm handling.
- 2. Wear eye and ear protection as appropriate.** Firearms are loud. They can also emit debris and hot gases that can cause injury. For these reasons, safety glasses and ear protectors are recommended.
- 3. Be sure your gun and ammunition are compatible.** Only cartridges or shells designed for a particular gun can be safely fired by that gun. Most guns have their cartridge or shell type stamped on the barrel. Ammunition can be identified by information printed on the box and stamped on each cartridge. Do not fire the gun if there is any question about the compatibility of the gun and ammunition.
- 4. Carry only one gauge/caliber of ammunition when shooting.** Smaller ammunition can be accidentally placed in a gun chamber designed for larger ammunition, creating an obstruction

and a very hazardous situation. Remove unfired ammunition from clothing when you have finished shooting to avoid accidentally mixing different ammunition next time you go shooting.

- 5. Be sure of your target—and what's beyond.** Be absolutely sure you have identified your target without any doubt. Equally important, be aware of the area beyond your target. This means observing your prospective area of fire before you shoot. Never fire in a direction where there are people or any other potential for mishap. It's simple: think first, shoot second.
- 6. Don't mix alcohol or drugs with shooting.** Alcohol, as well as any other substance likely to impair mental or physical functions of the body, should not be used before or while handling firearms.

## OWNING & HANDLING A GUN

- 7. Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.** There's a natural tendency to place your finger on the trigger when holding a gun. Avoid it! Your trigger finger should be extended, pointing forward, pressed against the side of the firearm, above the trigger area.
- 8. Keep the action open and the gun unloaded until ready to use.** Whenever you pick up any gun, immediately check the action and check to see that the chamber is unloaded. If the gun has a magazine, make sure it is empty. Even if the

magazine is empty or removed, a cartridge may still remain in the firing chamber. If you do not know how to open the gun's action, leave it alone or get help from someone who is knowledgeable.

- 9. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.** Whether you are shooting or simply handling your gun, never point the muzzle at yourself or at others. Common sense should dictate which direction is safest depending on your location and various other conditions. Generally speaking, it is safest to have the gun pointed upward or towards the ground.
- 10. Store your guns safely and securely when not in use.** Hiding guns where you think children or others will not find them is not enough. Always store your guns unloaded and locked in a case or gun safe when not in use, with ammunition locked and stored in a separate location.
- 11. Consider temporary off-site storage if a family member may be suicidal.** When an emotional crisis (like a break-up, job loss, or legal trouble) or a major change in someone's behavior (like depression, violence, or heavy drinking) causes concern, storing guns outside the home for a while may save a life. Friends as well as some shooting clubs, police departments, or gun shops may be able to store them for you until the situation improves.