



Protecting Our Children

Ending The Tragedy Of 'Family Fire'

(NAPSA)—On the battlefield, one of the greatest tragedies is “friendly fire,” and the military does everything in its power to avoid these incidents through rigorous training, constant communication, and a deadly serious focus on the safe use of weapons. All Americans would be wise to look to our military professionals as an example of how to solve the tragedy of “family fire” in this country.

Nearly 3,000 kids are shot every year by guns that come from within our homes. While these tragedies are hard to think about, there is much we can do to keep our families safe.

As a Marine Corps combat veteran and lifelong gun owner, I enjoy firearms and marksmanship. Guns are a big part of military culture. Many of my civilian friends also enjoy shooting, and all of us are alarmed by the number of gun deaths each year in America. What is especially hard for me to understand are the preventable deaths caused by negligent gun owners who improperly store their firearms. Family fire rips apart families and shatters whole communities, and so much more can be done to stop it.

We shouldn't need legislation to know what's sensible to keep our families and loved ones safe. Responsible gun owners realize that proper storage of weapons saves lives and it's our duty to keep firearms out of the wrong hands. Can we agree it's our job to do everything we can to keep kids safe?

Ending “Family Fire”

Eight kids are unintentionally shot by a gun every day. Since September 11, 2001, nearly 57,000 kids have been killed or injured by firearms. This is almost the same number as servicemembers who have been killed and wounded in action in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past 17 years of war.

Gun owners who don't properly secure their weapons cause those incidents. As someone who has undergone extensive weapons and safety training while in the military, I'm shocked and appalled that today there are 1.7 million American homes with kids living with unsecured, loaded guns. Each of these families is living a hair's breadth away from tragedy.

What Every Gun Owner Can Do

Fortunately, unintentional shootings in the home are largely preventable



Proper precautions and gun safety smarts can prevent the tragedy of family fire accidents.

through safe gun storage. Parents, veterans and all gun owners can do our part to keep families and communities safe. Here are some proven ways we can save lives:

1. Just as in the military, our guns should be unloaded when not in use and locked up in a safe, gun vault or storage case that's inaccessible to kids.

2. Store ammunition in a secure location away from your firearms.

3. Ensure you also secure the combination or keys to your safe(s), vault(s) or case(s).

4. Teach kids firearm responsibility and safety. Guns are not toys. They are deadly weapons designed to stop beating hearts. If your kids see a gun lying around, teach them not to touch it and to tell an adult.

5. Kids should never use a gun without adult supervision. (If your child has friends visiting, it's always best to get their parents' permission first.)

6. If your child is visiting a friend's home, ask the parent(s) if they have guns in the home and how they are stored.

7. Never assume kids don't know where guns are stored in the home. They always do.

In the Marine Corps, we had a saying that every time we lost a Marine to a preventable incident, we did the enemies' job for them. Remember, there are no “accidents” with firearms—there is only negligence. Keep your families safe by keeping your guns secure.

Learn More

You can learn more about preventing gun accidents from the experts at www.EndFamilyFire.org.

Joe Plenzler is a retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel and combat veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is a gun owner and avid shooter.