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Safe Storage Ordinance Goes into Effect Thursday

Firearms must be safely secured when inside the home

San Diego's Safe Storage of Firearms Ordinance, which was approved by the City Council in July, goes into effect on Thursday, September 12. The law requires all residents of the City of San Diego to safely lock or store firearms that are inside their residences, unless the weapon is being carried on the body or in the immediate control of its owner or another authorized user.

City Attorney Mara W. Elliott, who authored the ordinance, urged gun owners to obtain approved trigger locks or safes and begin practicing safe storage today. Gun owners have many options under the law, and can choose a device at a price that meets their individual needs.

Free firearm safety devices are also available. A device was included with any firearms sold in California after January 1, 2002. 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/>. In addition, Alzheimer's San Diego offers free gun locks to families impacted by dementia. San Diegans can inquire about a free lock through this program by calling (858) 492-4400. Residents can also inquire at any San Diego Police station about obtaining a free gun lock through Project ChildSafe.

Devices and locks can be purchased through online retailers, at gun shops, and at retail stores. A list of approved devices can be found on the California Department of Justice's Bureau of Firearms interactive website at <https://oag.ca.gov/firearms/roster/certified-firearms/search>.

"The City of San Diego is one of the nation's safest cities because we enact simple, common-sense laws that protect children and other vulnerable community members," City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **"Safe storage is proven to prevent tragedies and save lives by keeping guns out of the hands of minors, unauthorized users, and individuals going through personal crises that could result in them harming themselves or others. We all are safer when this law is followed."**

The City Attorney proposed the gun-safety law to help reduce accidental shootings of children and other firearm-related injuries and deaths. The ordinance was given final approval by the City Council on July 30.

The Safe Storage of Firearms Ordinance requires that any guns in a residence be stored in an approved locked container, or disabled by a trigger lock, unless they are carried on the body or are in the immediate control of an authorized user.

Many types of lock boxes, gun safes, and trigger locks are available depending on the owner's needs and preferences. 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 options and can be opened with a combination lock or key.

Only 54 percent of firearm owners with children at home keep their firearms secured. Studies show that these unsecured weapons are frequently accessible to – and accessed by – young children, even when their parents believe they are not. Across the United States, 4.6 million children live in homes with at least one loaded and unlocked firearm.

Suicide attempts are often impulsive acts, with one study finding that one-fourth of suicide attempts by individuals between the ages of 13 and 34 occurred within five minutes of their decision to attempt suicide. Secured firearms counter this impulsivity by giving the individual time to contact family, friends, and healthcare professionals who, in turn, have time to respond.

The safe storage of firearms is especially important for seniors and their families. Firearms are the most common method of suicide among seniors, and 91 percent of all firearm deaths in older adults are by suicide.

Unwanted firearms can be turned over, unloaded, to the San Diego Police Department. Gun owners should call the nearest San Diego Police station for hours of operation before arriving. The phone numbers and addresses can be found here: <https://www.sandiego.gov/police/contact>. Residents are advised to enter the station without the firearm and let the officer working behind the counter know that you have a gun outside that you wish to turn in. The police officer will walk out with you and retrieve the firearm.

The Safe Storage of Firearms Ordinance encourages the reporting of lost or stolen firearms. The California Penal Code already requires gun owners to report lost or stolen firearms to law enforcement within five days. Anyone complying with that law will not be prosecuted for violating the Safe Storage of Firearms ordinance.

On August 28, the Solana Beach City Council approved on first reading a similar safe storage of firearms ordinance. It would become the second city in San Diego County and 17th California municipality to do so.

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