



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 26, 2020

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Safe Storage of Firearms More Important Than Ever *With children home from school, risk of tragedy escalates*

San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott today urged families that own guns to carefully evaluate the safety of their homes and take all measures required by law to protect children who stay at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

School closures and stay-at-home orders came quickly and many parents and guardians -- including grandparents who provide daycare -- are now settling into new routines that can require a top-to-bottom reassessment of a home's safety.

Any safety check needs to include compliance with San Diego's Safe Storage of Firearms Ordinance, which went into effect in September 2019 and requires that all firearms be secured with a trigger lock or in a gun safe when they are not in the possession or immediate control of an authorized user.

“When you have guns and children in the home and do not practice safe storage, you are increasing the risk that someone will be accidentally shot,” City Attorney Mara Elliott said. **“Children are very resourceful when it comes to locating things their parents thought they’d never find. When they find a gun, it often leads to tragedy.”**

Of particular concern is that children can be left unsupervised as parents work from home, leave home for essential jobs, and otherwise adjust to life under self-quarantine. No one should assume their children don't know where guns are, or that they can't be accessed.

Elliott noted that cost-effective safe storage devices – trigger locks, lockboxes, and gun safes – can be quickly and easily purchased online and delivered to the home. Additionally, all guns sold in California after January 1, 2002 were required to come with a free trigger lock.

Nationwide, 4.5 million children live in homes with one or more loaded and unlocked firearms, and only 54 percent of gun owners with children practice safe storage of their firearms. Furthermore, 73 percent of children under age 10 know where their parents store their guns, and 36 percent have handled the firearms without their parents' knowledge.

The City of San Diego's Safe Storage of Firearms Ordinance requires that anyone with guns in their home must keep all firearms secured so that unauthorized users -- including children, family members with dementia, and

those prohibited by law from possessing firearms -- cannot access the weapons. Parents and guardians must ensure that firearms are kept in locked containers or disabled with trigger locks.

The Ordinance was passed with a 7-2 vote of the City Council on July 30, 2019 and went into effect on September 12, 2019. The City Attorney's Office has been conducting outreach to the community since the law's passage to ensure compliance. In February the San Diego City Attorney's Office partnered with the San Diego Unified School District on an outreach program to educate the families of their 121,000 students about the requirements of the Safe Storage law.

Earlier this week, the Office contacted nine more school districts that have students living within the San Diego City limits, asking them to help spread the Safe Storage message to their students' families, especially while children are home from school.

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