

WHAT IS SECURE FIREARM STORAGE?

“Secure firearm storage” means locking your firearm(s) in a location or with a device that prevents unauthorized users from accessing them.

WHY IS SECURE FIREARM STORAGE IMPORTANT?

Secure storage is a key component of responsible firearm ownership and ensuring household and community safety.

It can prevent

- 1 theft and the likelihood that the stored firearm(s) be used in criminal activity,
- 2 accidental injury and death among young children, and
- 3 fatal suicide attempts by delaying access to a highly lethal method of self-injury.

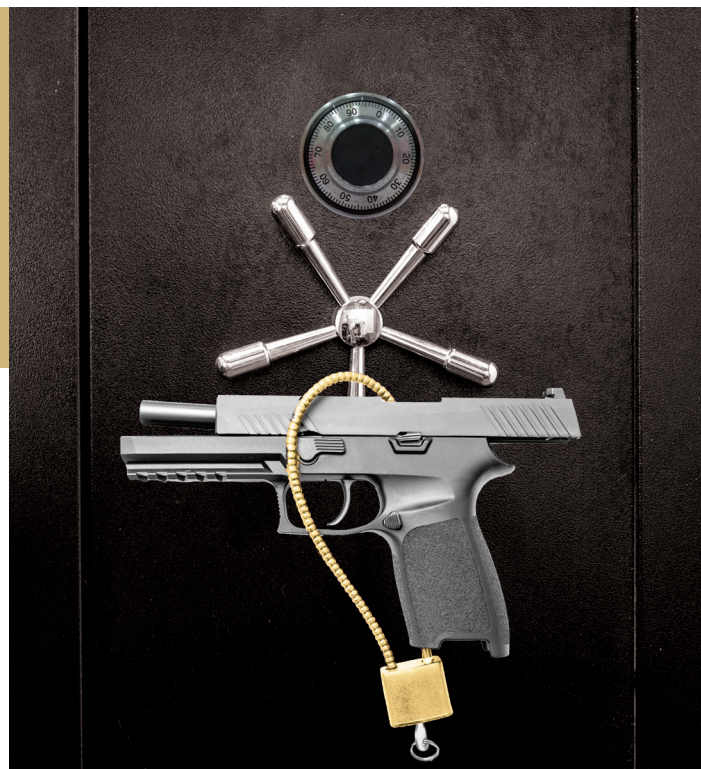
WHAT SHOULD I AVOID?

Only authorized firearm users should know the locations of device keys or device locking combinations.

Avoid giving access to household members who might be at risk of hurting themselves or others, whether from a mental health condition, drug or alcohol use, cognitive impairment, or life stresses.

Avoid giving unsupervised access to children and adolescents under the age of 18. Children and adolescents can face mental health challenges and life stressors and are also prone to emotional swings and impulsivity.

Avoid hiding firearms as the main method of secure firearm storage. Research studies have shown that, in households where firearms are hidden, children commonly know the hiding place.



WHAT COULD SECURE FIREARM STORAGE LOOK LIKE IN MY HOUSEHOLD?

Firearm advocacy organizations and medical professionals suggest that firearms be stored locked and unloaded, with ammunition stored separate.

However, deciding what storage will look like in your home will be influenced by:

- Type and quantity of firearms owned
- Intended use
- Financial limitations
- Household makeup

For example:

- If you are primarily a hunter, recreational shooter, or collector and immediate access is not a priority, a large safe or secure gun room may be appropriate.
- If you use a firearm for home- or self-defense, that firearm can be securely stored but remain quickly accessible by using locking devices with biometric (e.g., fingerprint) or traditional locking features (i.e., keys, number codes).



Firearm Injury Prevention Initiative
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

**Injury & Violence
Prevention Center**
colorado school of public health

WHAT DEVICES CAN BE USED TO SECURE MY FIREARMS?

Locking devices designed for firearms are best, but any locked room, cabinet, or device which limits access is better than leaving firearm(s) unsecured and accessible to anyone who may find them or knows where they are stored.

Devices have a variety of locking mechanism options:



Standard key locks



Combination locks



Biometric (e.g., fingerprint) locks



Digital keypad

Some common firearm-specific devices include:



Large gun safes: Depending on the model, large gun safes can be capable of storing up to a dozen firearms or more, including long guns.

- Prevents theft
- Prevents damage
- \$\$\$



Smaller lockboxes or vaults: Range of sizes capable of holding one to several handguns. Many models are capable of being mounted securely into vehicles, cabinets, drawers, etc.

- Portable
- Prevents damage
- \$\$



Trigger or cable locks: These devices work for a single firearm and are typically able to accommodate both handguns and long guns of varying types.

- Prevents theft
- \$

Secure storage and firearm suicide prevention

In Colorado, **75% of firearm-involved deaths are suicides**. Firearms are particularly dangerous in times of suicide risk because they are lethal: **90% of suicide attempts with a firearm are fatal**.

Among the ~100 Colorado youth who die by suicide each year, **40% use a firearm - and 80% of the time that firearm belongs to a family member**.

The good news is that suicidal crises are often very brief, often with only minutes between the final decision to attempt suicide and the act itself.³ **Putting time and space between an at-risk person and a lethal method (like a firearm) can be lifesaving.**

If you're worried about suicide, reducing firearm access can save lives - but you should also seek professional help. Call 988 or visit coloradocrisiservices.org for free guidance.

Secure storage and theft prevention

Thousands of firearms are stolen in Colorado every year, some of which are then diverted to crime.⁴ Secure storage inside the home can help prevent theft. Firearm owners are advised against storing firearms in their cars/vehicles, especially if they are unsecured.

Temporary Out of Home Storage

Sometimes, the safest option is to move all firearms out of your home, such as during a family crisis or if you or a family member is feeling suicidal. In Colorado, individuals can transfer firearms to immediate family members without going through a firearm transfer process/background check. Locations in your community, such as gun shops, shooting ranges, and police departments may be willing to store your firearms temporarily.

Find locations in Colorado:



Extreme Risk Protection Orders

If a person poses an immediate risk to themselves or others – and voluntary reduction in access will not work – an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) may be an option. An ERPO is a legal order that prohibits an at-risk individual from possessing or purchasing firearms. In Colorado, ERPOs can be requested by law enforcement officers, family members, and/or household members. A judge determines whether to issue an order, which can be for 14 days or (after a hearing) up to one year. Learn more via the [Colorado Judicial Branch website](https://www.coloradojudicialbranch.org).

Colorado Judicial Branch



SOURCES:

1. Colorado Violent Death Reporting System, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.
2. Suicide Case-Fatality Rates in the United States, 2007 to 2014. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 2019;171(12):885-95. doi: 10.7326/m19-1324

3. Harvard Injury Control Research Center, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter>
4. Colorado Attorney General, <https://coag.gov/firearmsafety/>