



SAFE STORAGE OF FIREARMS – THE FACTS:

- **Safe Storage refers to how a firearm is stored when not in use or when not being carried by its owner.**
- **The safest and most effective method of storage is to lock and separate the unloaded firearm from ammunition**
- **The means to open the containers (either a key, a combination or code) should only be known to the owner.**

Surveys show that more than half of gun owners do not want to use this method for fear of not being able to access their gun quickly enough in a home invasion type scenario, a fear that is totally out of sync with the reality of how rare such events are. Everytown for Gun Safety, a nonprofit that advocates for gun control, reports that "households that locked both firearms and ammunition were associated with a **78 percent lower** risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries and an **85 percent lower** risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children and teens, compared to those that locked neither."

- **Easy access to loaded firearms impacts gun deaths, injuries, and other gun crimes in 3 ways:**
 - Child access to loaded firearms leads to accidental shootings, suicides and even homicides.
 - In 80% of school shootings the shooter accessed the gun from their home or that of a relative or friend.
 - Children of all ages, even those younger than two, shoot siblings, family members or others.
 - In **2021** children **under 5** were among the groups with the highest rate of accidental firearms death.
 - A **2021** Harvard survey found that **36%** of gun owners with children leave their firearms unlocked in the home. Fifteen percent stored at least one firearm both unlocked and loaded, which poses the most risk for children.
- i. When unauthorized adults access loaded firearms, especially adults who are prohibited from owning firearms, or who are suicidal, this leads to homicides, suicides, and violent assaults.
- ii. When thieves have easy access to steal firearms, the weapons move into the unregulated marketplace (black market) which supplies criminals and those who are prohibited from purchasing or owning firearms. These firearms are then used in homicides, armed robberies, and armed assaults etc.

According to the FBI, during the six-year period from **2012 to 2017**, more than **\$829 million** worth of guns were reported stolen from individuals nationwide, amounting to an estimated **1.8 million** guns. Including an estimated **43,135** guns in Virginia. (**Note**, these are the numbers that were reported to the FBI, but many gun thefts are never reported and many law enforcement agencies do not report any gun thefts to the FBI!)