

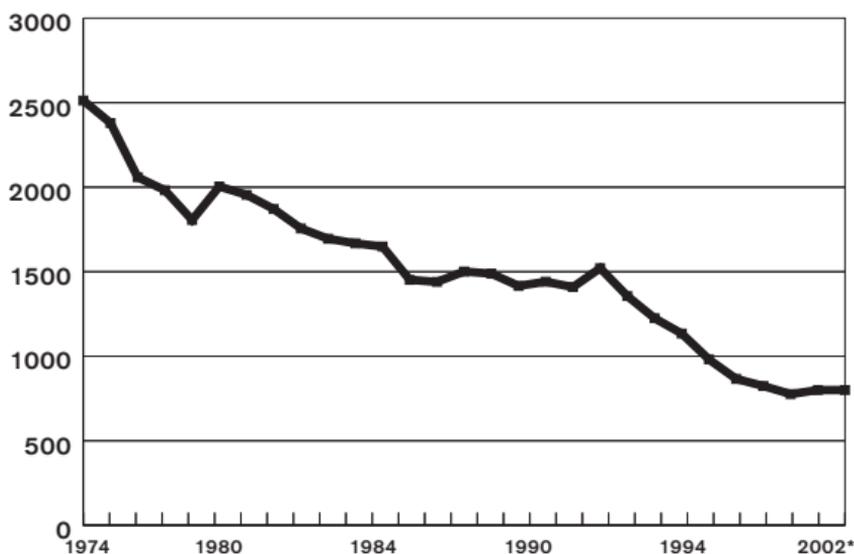
S A A M I

SPORTING ARMS AND AMMUNITION MANUFACTURERS' INSTITUTE, INC.

Since 1926

Decades of Success In Reducing Firearms Accidents

**Accidental Firearms Fatalities
1974 through 2002***



*National Safety Council, Injury Facts 2003 Edition

Background Paper #1

INTRODUCTION

The sporting firearms and ammunition industry has a long history of leadership and involvement on the issue of firearms safety and has effectively promoted safety education for nearly 100 years. Beginning in the 1920s, the “Ten Commandments of Gun Safety” paved the way for a broad-based safety campaign that today includes classroom instruction and radio, television, print and Internet messages.

ACCIDENTAL FIREARMS FATALITIES AT AN ALL-TIME LOW

Firearms ownership and use have increased significantly over the years, with an estimated 200-250 million firearms currently owned by some 75-85 million law-abiding Americans. Yet, accidental firearm fatalities have declined dramatically during this time and are at their lowest levels since statistics were first compiled a century ago. Over the past 70 years, due in large part to industry-sponsored gun safety and hunter education efforts, overall accidental firearm deaths have declined more than 70% from an average of 3,000 deaths annually in the 1920s and 1930s to 800 in 2002. According to the National Safety Council (NSC), such tragic accidents have declined 43% from 1992-2002.

Accidental firearm fatalities are at their lowest levels since statistics were first compiled a century ago.

In the home, accidental firearm fatalities have been reduced by 50% between 1992 and 2002, from 1,000 to 500 annually.

The National Safety Council ranks firearm accidents among the lowest of all causes of unintentional deaths. For example, NSC statistics for 2002 show 44,000 deaths related to motor vehicle accidents, 14,500 to falls, 3,000 to drowning, 2,900 to fires or burns, 4,200 to choking and 15,700 to poisoning.

MANUFACTURING STANDARDS

The firearms industry has long recognized that a safe product built to exacting standards is an important element of the safety equation.

The Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (SAAMI) was founded in 1926 at the request of the federal government to serve the mutual interests of the U.S. sporting firearms and ammunition industry, with emphasis on activities to ensure safe use of their products by sportsmen and others having a lawful use for them. Today, SAAMI works not only with its own members, but also with government agencies and international authorities, such as the United Nations, to help re-address concerns of irresponsible and illegal firearms use.

SAAMI regularly submits its standards and procedures for review by the National Bureau of Standards and Technology, the FBI and the Department of Justice.

Various SAAMI committees actively review current industry test methods and procedures and recommend manufacturing safety practices. At SAAMI's initiative, four voluntary industry standards, recognized as SAAMI Standards, have been developed concerning the manufacture of sporting firearms and ammunition. These standards are regularly submitted for the review procedure prescribed by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and offered for recognition as American National Standards. As part of this review process, SAAMI regularly submits its standards and procedures for review by more than a dozen private facilities and government agencies, including H.P. White Laboratories, the National Bureau of Standards and Technology, the FBI and the Department of Justice.

EDUCATION AND RESPONSIBILITY ARE THE KEY

Recognizing that essentially all firearms accidents are the result of carelessness or a lack of knowledge of fundamental safety rules or procedures, the sporting firearms and ammunition industry has emphasized educational efforts that help instill a clear sense of responsible firearms ownership and use. Such safety programs have proven demonstrably effective: Whether in the field, at the range or in the home, a responsible and knowledgeable gun owner is rarely involved in a firearms accident of any kind.

Specific safety messages (on hunting, shooting and home firearms safety) have been and continue to be widely distributed through a variety of channels and media. Specific examples include:

- Distribution of more than 50 million safety booklets over the past 15 years.
- Support of hunter education programs that now involve more than 55,000 instructors and 750,000 students, annually, in all 50 states.
- Distribution of key messages on home firearms safety through print, radio and television public service announcements to nationwide audiences, and by the industry-developed Project HomeSafe[®] and Project ChildSafeSM Programs.

“ACCIDENT-PROOFING” FIREARMS

Recently, recommendations have been made that call for a variety of mechanical alterations to firearms meant to render the firearm “childproof.” Although well-intended, such recommendations reveal a lack of understanding of firearms design issues and, more importantly, ignore the primary issue of home firearms safety. No alteration to a firearm or addition of a so-called “childproof safety device” can guarantee safety if a loaded gun is left accessible to children by a careless adult. Altering firearms in an effort to make them “childproof” may well have the unintended reverse effect of

actually making them less safe, less reliable and fostering a dangerously false sense of security among certain gun owners. Attempts to create so-called “childproof” guns may mask the overall safety imperative and can lead to unsafe handling and storage practices based on the mistaken belief that the firearm itself has been rendered harmless and can no longer endanger the lives of children.

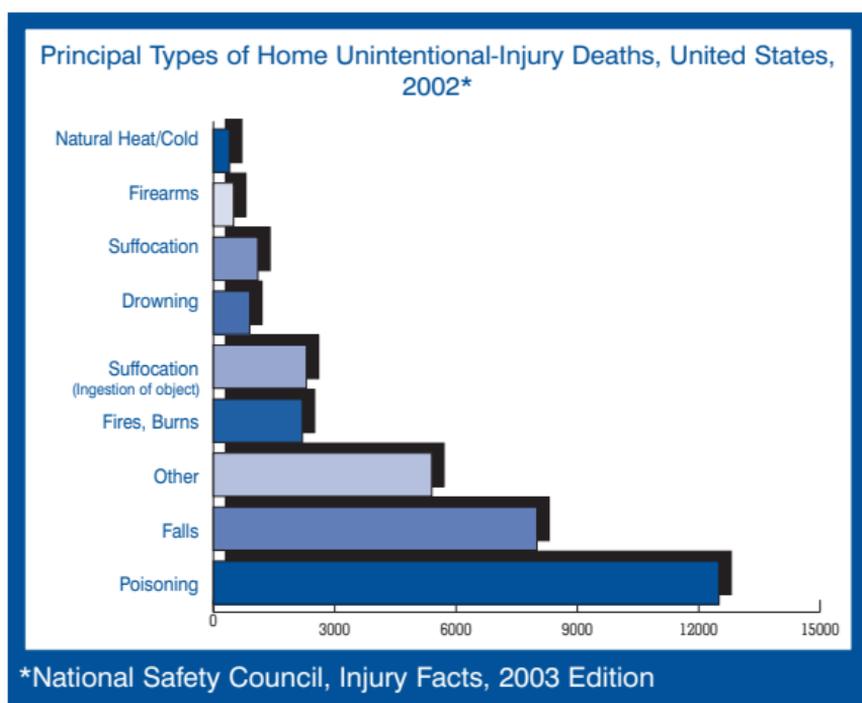
SAAMI is committed to working toward an ever-decreasing number of firearms accidents, the vast majority of which can be prevented by following three basic, common sense safety rules:

- Treat every firearm as if it were loaded.
- Keep muzzle pointed in a safe direction.
- Keep fingers off the trigger. Don't rely on your firearm's “safety” device.
- Keep the firearm unloaded when not in use.

A steady and significant decrease in the number of accidental firearm deaths over the past several decades clearly demonstrates the value of safety efforts that focus on teaching and encouraging responsible firearms ownership and use, and the members of the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute are committed to continuing their support and promotion of safety programs that will effect even more dramatic accident reduction in the years ahead.

Firearms safety programs administered and funded by the firearms industry, the National Rifle Association and volunteer groups have made possible a long decline in firearms accidents.

National Safety Council statistics now reveal that firearms accidents represent one of the smallest categories of accidental home fatalities.



2002 figures are preliminary

The Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute is a trade association of the nation's leading manufacturers of sporting firearms and ammunition. Founded in 1926 at the request of the federal government, SAAMI has been actively involved in the publication of industry standards, coordination of technical data and the promotion of safe and responsible firearms use. SAAMI currently publishes more than 700 standards related to firearm and ammunition quality and safety. For a listing of SAAMI members, please write to:

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