

**“...we urge that you not
purchase a firearm.”**

**...and other comments on
safe and responsible firearms use**

Second Edition

Presented by

S A A M I

SPORTING ARMS AND AMMUNITION MANUFACTURERS' INSTITUTE, INC.

Since 1926

A Commitment to Standards and Safety

The Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute is an association of the nation's leading manufacturers of sporting firearms, ammunition and components. Since being founded in 1926, 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 voluntary standards related to firearm and ammunition quality and safety.

SAAMI is an accredited standards developer for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). As an accredited standards developer, SAAMI's standards for industry test methods, definitive proof loads and ammunition performance specifications are subject to ANSI review and various ANSI criteria.

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Standards are developed when the governing body, SAAMI, proposes a new standard and circulates the draft to canvasses. Canvasses for each standard include government agencies (such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the US Customs Service), non-SAAMI member companies and interested parties (such as the National Institute of Standards and Technology). Once the draft standard has been reviewed and returned to SAAMI with comments or corrections, the canvass group votes on whether or not to accept the standard. If there is disagreement and a canvasee opposes the standard but the standard is accepted by the other members of the canvass group, there is an ANSI appeals process that decides the matter.

Recognizing that essentially all firearms accidents are the result of carelessness or a lack of knowledge of fundamental safety rules, SAAMI has emphasized educational efforts that instill a clear sense of responsible firearms ownership and use. Such safety programs have been demonstrably effective.

During the 1920's and 1930's, accidental firearms deaths averaged close to 3,000 annually. In 1995, the total had decreased to 1,400. This reduction of more than 50 percent is largely due to the expanded safety education efforts of the firearms industry, the National Rifle Association of America, the Hunter Education Association, and many volunteer groups. In 1995 alone, accidental firearm fatalities fell 7 percent to their lowest point since 1903. In the field, the number of annual hunting accident fatalities has decreased from over 400 to less than 90 in just the past 15 years.

SAAMI members are committed to build on this safety record with programs that help all our customers fully understand the basic tenets of responsible firearms ownership.

Responsible Distribution, Responsible Ownership

An Industry Perspective...

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Growing concern about violent crime has intensified the national debate over the proper role of firearms in today's society. At this time, for example, are additional "gun control" laws called for? If so, what type of measures might be appropriate and to whom should they be directed? And, to what extent can any such measures be expected to curb gun-related crime?

The members of the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute realize that there are no simple answers to these questions. Indisputably, crime and random violence are among the most complex and difficult social issues we face. We must look not only to minimize the root causes of crime, but also to deal with current concerns regarding public safety.

Cover Quote: The cover quote appears in context on page 7.

Clearly, there is a broad consensus that our overburdened and often ineffective criminal justice system needs to be reformed. At the same time, we recognize that issues involving firearms should not be ignored. **The members of SAAMI strongly support measures designed to keep firearms out of the hands of criminals and other individuals who are not to be considered responsible firearms owners.**

Efforts that promote responsible gun ownership and measures that reduce the illegal trade in and the criminal use of firearms are worthy goals and can offer substantive approaches to reducing violent crime and other gun-related tragedies. Toward those ends, the members of SAAMI strongly urge the consideration of the following:

“SAAMI members support appropriately thorough background checks of individuals seeking to obtain a Federal Firearms License.”

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In our collective efforts to stem the illegal trade in firearms, we support the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (BATF) efforts to conduct appropriate background checks on Federal Firearms applicants to ensure that such individuals do not have a criminal record and that their planned business will meet with all applicable local and state laws.

“SAAMI members urge the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to intensify its efforts to prosecute illegal gun sales.”

We think there should be severe penalties for firearms dealers who knowingly sell to unqualified individuals or who knowingly participate in “straw man” transactions in which a dealer knows that an ostensibly “legitimate” customer is actually purchasing the firearm to redeliver it to an unqualified person or for transport into a prohibited jurisdiction.

“SAAMI members support an “instant check” system at the point of sale.”

There is no question that adequate safeguards need to be in place to deny firearms to felons and individuals who are mentally incompetent. We believe the most effective means to accomplish this is through an instantaneous, point-of-sale background check. As of this writing in the Spring of 1998, a national instant check system is scheduled to be in place by November 30, 1998, pursuant to the 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill. SAAMI supports the introduction of the instant-check system as an important tool to help dealers identify individuals attempting to purchase firearms in violation of existing state or federal laws. At the same time, however, SAAMI members urge that regulations, procedures and fees implemented as part of this system not restrict the legitimate and responsible purchase of sporting firearms.

“SAAMI members support efforts to eliminate guns in schools.”

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Violence in schools is intolerable. With certain exceptions for educational purposes and for organized in-school and after-school activities such as riflery teams, scouting and the like, there is absolutely no reason why guns should be in any school building. Unlawful students who bring guns to school should be immediately expelled and prosecuted.

“SAAMI members urge the entertainment industry to reconsider the production of television programming and films that emphasize, indeed that often glorify and romanticize, firearms as instruments of mayhem and destruction.”

While various studies have attempted to quantify the impact of television and film violence on youth, we believe

common sense dictates that saturation of our youth with excessively violent depictions in the name of “entertainment” has a desensitizing effect on their perceptions of the value of human life. Glorifying killing as a means to settle disputes clearly sends a terribly wrong message to our nation’s young people.

“SAAMI members cannot over-emphasize the value of safety education as the means to prevent gun-related tragedies.”

SAAMI members have been actively and effectively promoting safety education to their customers for over 75 years. Due in large part to industry-sponsored efforts, accidental firearms deaths have been reduced by more than 50% over the past several decades, even though firearms ownership and use have increased significantly during this period.

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Recently, gun-related fatalities have been compared to automobile accident fatalities in an attempt to position death from gunshots as a “health care” issue. Such a comparison is patently misleading because only a very small percentage of firearms-related deaths are, in fact, accidental. For example, automobiles are involved with approximately 48,000 deaths each year, over 99% of which are accidental. Firearms are involved with about 37,000 deaths, but only about 4% are accidental. Suicides and homicides account for 95% of this total. The criminal misuse of guns is a crime and violence problem, not a disease or health issue.

“SAAMI members cannot over-emphasize the importance of secure storage of firearms and ammunition as the key to preventing home accidents, especially among children.”

Many firearms accidents in the home can be eliminated by simply keeping firearms and ammunition secured and inac-

cessible to children and unauthorized adults. No so called “Childproof Safety Device” can guarantee safety if a loaded gun is left accessible to children by a careless adult.

Knowledgeable and responsible firearms ownership is always the key to accident prevention and SAAMI members are committed to working toward an ever-decreasing number of firearms accidents through a broad-range of educational efforts.

If you are not willing to accept certain basic responsibilities and adhere to important rules of firearms ownership and storage, we urge that you not purchase a firearm.

“SAAMI members urge all elected officials to focus state and federal anti-crime efforts toward strengthening our criminal justice system, particularly in the enforcement of tough sentences for use of firearms in a crime.”

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We believe that one of the most glaring deficiencies in our criminal justice system is that convicted violent criminals are typically serving only a fraction of the time in prison compared to the sentences received at trial. If required to serve at least 85% of their sentences, violent criminals would serve 2.3 times longer. This would prevent many violent crimes committed by repeat offenders out on parole. We understand that prisons cannot end crime, but they can save lives.

“SAAMI members unanimously support firearms-related legislation when such proposals are directed at curbing the criminal misuse or the illegal distribution of firearms. We feel that it is equally important that any such legislation also adequately protect the rights of law-abiding citizens.”

We believe that many of today’s firearms control proposals,

while well meaning, are misdirected. Undue and often arbitrary restrictions on lawful citizens, who happen to own firearms for any number of legitimate reasons, serve only to divert limited manpower and funding from substantive efforts to curb violent crime. It has often been said, but it is worth repeating, that law-abiding citizens who own firearms neither cause nor contribute to the problem of violent crime in America.

America's Hunting and Shooting Traditions \$30.9 Billion in Economic Activity and 986,000 Jobs...

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Perhaps no other pastime is as deeply rooted in America's history as hunting. While among America's oldest traditions, hunting and recreational shooting continue as one of the nation's most popular outdoor recreations with some 31.9 million enjoying these sports each year. Economic impact surveys by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (Southwick Associates), the National Shooting Sports Foundation and others indicate that the hunting and shooting sports market generates more than \$30.9 billion of economic activity annually. This activity supports more than 986,000 jobs.

The nation's hunters and recreational target shooters spend some \$5.5 billion annually on equipment, including firearms, ammunition, clothing, reloading equipment, optics and accessories. There are more than 1,100 manufacturers, 100 distributors and 14,000 retailers in the United States whose business is totally or largely dependent on the hunting and recreational shooting sports market, according to the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

Over many years, SAAMI members have played an important role in assuring that these valued traditions and our unique wildlife heritage have prospered.

Excise Taxes

In 1937, the sporting firearms and ammunition industry actively supported enactment of excise taxes on sporting long arms and ammunition to fund wildlife conservation programs that benefit hunters and non-hunters alike. In 1970, the firearms industry again proposed, and actively supported, a similar 10% excise tax on handguns. These taxes currently raise in excess of \$150 million annually for wildlife management and habitat acquisition and improvement programs. More than \$2.5 billion has been raised for conservation since these taxes were enacted.

Recently, several proposals have been made to increase significantly the current excise taxes on firearms and ammunition to pay for the health care of uninsured victims of violent crime.

The members of SAAMI believe that to tax the legitimate user of a product — whether that product is a firearm, an automobile, an alcoholic beverage or a telephone — to pay for the damages inflicted by the criminal use of that product is an illogical, if not unprecedented, concept in America.

However, this organization believes there can be no rational argument for the proposed increases which would, in effect, subsidize the consequences of criminal activity, rather than seek to curb its existence.

The Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute does not maintain that hunting, recreational shooting or the purchase of firearms for personal or home protection are acceptable merely because they make a significant contribution to our national and local economies. These activities are an acceptable, responsible and desirable ingredient of our nation's heritage. They should be continued because experience, statistical evidence and common sense tell us so. The economic impact of these activities must be

considered when well meaning, but less than fully informed individuals suggest that America would be a better place without hunting, recreational shooting or the right of self-protection — merely because those individuals possess a personal antipathy or apathy toward these activities.

For More Information...

We hope this brochure has provided you with a better understanding of our industry's commitment to responsible firearms ownership and use.

SAAMI welcomes your comments and suggestions. More detailed SAAMI position statements are available on request. Please write to:

Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute
Flintlock Ridge Office Center
11 Mile Hill Road
Newtown, CT 06470-2359

Membership

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