

Gun Safety

By Captain Ed Bailey

There are guns in approximately one-half of American households. There is an excellent chance your child may come in contact with a firearm in your home or in the home of a neighbor or even when playing with friends. Prevention is the key to safety!

- **Education is the key.** Once you remove the mystery surrounding guns, your child won't see it as an object of curiosity, and a potential accident may be avoided. Some suggestions would include:
 - **Teach your child to always be safe.** Explain to your child that he/she should not touch a gun unless you are present and give your child permission.
 - If your child sees a gun, her or she should follow the basic safety measures of the Elementary Gun Safety Education Program which are:
 - *Stop!*
 - *Don't Touch!*
 - *Leave The Area!*
 - *Tell An Adult!*
- **You must work with your child to reinforce these simple messages.** It is your responsibility to help your child be safe.
- **Explain to children the difference between television/movies and real life.** Actors use "pretend" guns and no one really gets hurt or dies. Cap guns and squirt guns are toys. BB guns are firearms and are not toys. They must never be confused with toy guns!
- **If your child plays with toy gun,** use this as an opportunity to demonstrate safe gun handling. For example:
 - Always point a gun in a safe direction.
 - Keep your finger off the trigger (until ready to shoot).
 - Keep the gun unloaded (until ready to use).
 - Ammunition is not a toy. Children should not be permitted to play with ammunition.
- **If you own a gun, you have the responsibility to know how to use and store it** safely as well as to set a safe and positive example for your children.
- **Keep your gun and ammunition securely stored** where a child (or unauthorized person) cannot access it.
- **Always follow safe gun handling rules.**
- **Answer your child's questions about guns openly and honestly.** Don't make a gun an object of curiosity for a child.