

# Negligent Discharges: The Statistics



Nationwide, accidental firearms-related fatalities remain at record lows, according to the 2007 Injury Facts report from the National Safety Council. That report also shows fatal accidents involving youths continuing to decline significantly. These downward trends are occurring, even though firearm ownership continues to rise in the United States. The estimated number of citizen-owned firearms is up to more than 290 million, while the number of American households with at least one firearm is now about 47.8 million.

Statistics in the National Safety Council's 2007 Injury Facts show a 40 percent decrease in accidental firearms-related fatalities over a 10-year period ending in 2005. The decline in firearms-related accidents involving children ages 14 and under between 1995 and 2003 was 69 percent.

All of these declines are attributed to a number of factors, starting with the shipment of free locking devices with all new firearms. Other factors have been industry-supported firearm-safety-education programs and technological advances in firearm designs and manufacturing processes. Last but not least are educational efforts by groups like the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the National Rifle Association, and state agencies.

Gun safety has been a concern in this country since the firing of the first firearm. The rules have changed very little from the early days, when round lead balls were tamped down the muzzles of rifles and pistols with hickory ramrods. Make it a point to learn the rules [see the list on pg. 13 and check out all three firearms-related articles that follow]. ■

**W**hile cleaning a personal handgun, a Navy PO2 decided to load it. Moments later, he accidentally dropped the weapon on the ground, and it discharged. The round hit the PO2 in his chest; he was pronounced dead on arrival at a local hospital.

A Marine corporal was killed by his brother, who was clearing a rifle in the rear of a truck. The round hit the corporal in the back.

These fatalities are recorded in the Naval Safety Center's database for negligent discharges that occurred both on and off duty between FY1997 and FY2007 (through May 26). The Navy has had a total of seven such fatalities during this period, while the Marine Corps has lost 16 from negligent discharges.

## Resources:

- <http://www.gunsafetyeducation.com/> [*Gun Safety Education.Com*]
- <http://w3.agsfoundation.com/home.html> [*Educating Americans About Gun Rights and Responsibilities*]
- <http://www.nrahq.org/education/guide.asp> [*NRA Gun Safety Rules*]
- [http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/watch/house/gun\\_safety.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/watch/house/gun_safety.html) [*Gun Safety*]