

# Quick—Shoot

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I had been waiting for weeks to go hog hunting, and the time finally had come. It was about 0500 Saturday morning when my buddy came to pick me up in his dad's brand new Ford F-350. The truck was spotless, inside and out, but it didn't stay that way very long.

We hit the highway and headed to a ranch in West Texas. On the way, we drove through several canyons and past a lot of wildlife. We saw deer, turkey and rodents, which got us excited and hopeful we would have good luck in the day's hunt. We were anxious to start our adventure and did everything we could to get to our hunt location quickly.

Once there, we were ready to hit the trail on our four-wheelers. There was just one problem: They wouldn't start. We subsequently decided to use the truck for the day's hog hunt.

I had brought along my Marlin 450 Magnum, which packed enough punch for hog hunting. My friend, on the other hand, had his Winchester 375 H&H Magnum, an incredibly powerful rifle specifically built to hunt African big game. The ballistics produced by his rifle far exceeded the requirements of what we needed that day. Specifically, the 375 H&H Magnum produces 4,265 foot-pounds of energy, which is more than twice as powerful as a standard hunting cartridge. Bottom line:

# That Truck!

We had some major firepower with us.

My friend drove, while I rode shotgun. We rested our rifles between us, with the barrels pointing toward the floorboard. That's a standard way of carrying rifles if you want to be able to get to them quickly.

We drove through the ranch in about an hour, without seeing any movement. We both had rounds loaded in the cylinders of our rifles but had agreed not to chamber a round unless we saw something we were about to shoot. While heading back to the ranch, I was looking down at my friend's rifle when I saw it didn't have a safety feature on it. I thought this situation was rare and asked him how he safes the gun to prevent it from firing accidentally.

At this point, my friend started playing with the hammer and trigger assembly of his rifle, explaining to me how to safe the weapon once the hammer had been pulled back. As he spoke, I watched him keep fiddling with his rifle. I couldn't help thinking how reckless he was being. I knew my rifle wasn't chambered, but I wasn't sure about my friend's weapon. His actions (pulling back the trigger and then safing the rifle) were making me nervous.

He continued displaying the gun's features until he finally cocked the hammer and pulled the trigger, thinking a round wasn't chambered. If about now you're thinking the rifle went off, you're right. The explosion was horrific. It sent what seemed like a shockwave through the closed cab of that F-350. We spent the next few seconds in a confused and dazed state.

I was trying to figure out if either of us had been injured, but my shock wouldn't let me think straight. With the gun's barrel having been pointed at the floorboard, pieces of carpet, metal, engine block, and gunpowder had blown into our faces. More shrapnel lay in the dirt road. As we both were walking away from the "dead" truck, I questioned my buddy about what just had happened. He looked at me and said, "I thought it wasn't loaded."

Comments like that are heard a lot after someone makes a mistake with a gun. Mistakes with guns never are good, and too many times, a person dies

from a firearm someone didn't think was loaded. Here are 12 rules to live by when it comes to handling firearms—commandments, actually—12 of them. Here they are:

- Firearms and alcohol or drugs (including the prescription kind) do not mix.
- Treat every firearm as if it's loaded.
- Never point the muzzle of a gun at anything you don't intend to shoot.
- When hunting in a party, always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
- Leave the safety on until you are ready to shoot.
- Know your target and what is beyond your target.
- Never give or take a firearm with the bolt or magazine action closed.
- Never pick up a firearm by the muzzle.
- If friends are with you, give your firearm to one of them before crossing obstacles (e.g., fences and ravines).
- Always check a barrel to make sure it's clear before loading.
- Before storing your firearm, do a sight-and-feel inspection of the chamber.
- Never trust others to follow these rules; make sure they do. The life you save may be your own.

Here's something else you need to remember: **It's illegal to hunt from a moving vehicle in the United States.** We were overly anxious to get to the big hunt that day. A little complacency could have led to much more than some explaining about a hole in the bottom of a new truck and a story for the campfire. Learn from our mistake; incorporate risk management into all your adventures. ■

## Resources:

- <http://www.gamecalls.net/huntingtips/safetytips.html> [*Hunting & Fishing Safety*]
- [http://w3.agsfoundation.com/safety/r\\_hunting.html](http://w3.agsfoundation.com/safety/r_hunting.html) [*Gun Safety Program*]
- <http://www.nrahq.org/education/guide.asp> [*NRA Gun Safety Rules*]
- <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/safetips/a-m/guns.htm> [*SafeTips Guns*].