

## **FIREARMS SAFETY BRIEF**

### **LOSSES**

Navy and Marine Corps losses involving gun handling and hunting for FY 91 through 95 include 15 fatalities. Firearms mishaps not only cause deaths, but serious injuries such as amputations and disfigurements. These injuries commonly involve the hand and legs.

### **BACKGROUND**

A review of firearm mishaps shows a variety of factors contribute to the typical injury. Most Navy and Marine Corps men and women accidentally shot thought their guns were unloaded. Others are shot when mistaken for big game. Forty-eight states have legislation requiring hunter's safety course. Some states require hunters to wear blaze orange clothing during deer season. The state of Florida requires homeowners to stow ammunition in locked cabinets separate from guns.

### **EXAMPLES**

The following are typical of mishap reports received at the naval Safety Center:

- a. A GSM3 was shot by another GSM3. The other GSM3 pulled a weapon from a drawer. He saw that the safety was off; the clip was not in the pistol and assumed it was empty. The victim reached for the gun as the other GSM3 accidentally pulled the trigger. He expected to hear a click. However, the .380 semi-automatic pistols discharged a round into the victim's chest. He died.
- b. A LT, his son and another shipmate were hunting. The shipmate stumbled over rough terrain in heavy thicket and his 12-gauge shotgun discharged. The buckshot struck the LT's neck that was hunting nearby. He died.
- c. Service member was observing a friend removing a loaded semi-automatic .380 pistols from a holster. His friend lost his grip on the gun due to his damp hands. The pistol fell to the floor and discharged. The round struck the victim in his neck. The safety was not on. He died.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Identify the hazards and assess risks. Making risk decisions and implementing controls to eliminate firearm mishaps are as follows:

- a. Take the National Rifle Association's Safe Hunter Course; it is usually offered through your recreation service office.
- b. Wear blaze orange clothing when hunting.
- c. Avoid alcoholic drinks while handling weapons.
- d. Always unload guns before carrying them inside vehicles, homes or campsites. Keep ammunition separate in locked cabinets.
- e. Keep gun barrels and actions clear of obstructions.
- f. If you have different caliber guns, be sure you use the proper size ammunition for your guns. Don't rely on feel; visually check the rounds.
- g. Keep the safety on until you are ready to shoot.
- h. Carry the gun so you can control the direction of the muzzle at all times (away from others).
- i. Positively know your target before you shoot.

j. Never shoot at a flat, hard surface or water.

k. Never climb a tree or fence with a loaded gun.

**SOURCE:**

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