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NEWS RELEASE



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September Proclaimed National Suicide Prevention Month
Ventura County Law Enforcement Reminds Public About Gun Safe Storage



VENTURA, Calif. – The Ventura County Board of Supervisors has officially proclaimed September as National Suicide Prevention Month, reaffirming their commitment to addressing the critical issue of mental health and suicide prevention in the community. This proclamation highlights the county's dedication to raising awareness, reducing stigma, and providing resources for individuals struggling with mental health challenges.

In 2023, Ventura County had 45 gun-suicide deaths, the largest number since 2018. Four of those residents were 21 year old or younger. Firearms have been the leading cause of death for US children and teens since 2020, representing 18% of all deaths for children 1 to 18 years old in 2022, according to the CDC.

“We know that when individuals have ready access to firearms in their homes, when they are improperly secured, or not secured at all, accidental, suicide, and homicide deaths can result,” Ventura County District Attorney Erik Nasarenko said in front of the Board of Supervisors.

This year's proclamation comes in the wake of a recent school shooting in Georgia. The tragic event serves as an important reminder for parents and legal guardians to understand their legal responsibilities regarding storage of firearms.

To promote firearm safety and protect children and schools from gun-related incidents, a coalition of Ventura County law enforcement agencies and educational leaders are relaunching a public service announcement (PSA). The PSA, titled "[Gun Safe Storage: It's The Law](#)," aims to raise awareness about the importance of secure gun storage and responsible firearms ownership.

The bullet points below spell out California law regarding the storage of firearms:

- With very limited exceptions, California law makes a person criminally liable for keeping any firearm, loaded or unloaded, within any premises that are under their custody and control where that person knows or reasonably should know that a child is likely to gain access to the firearm without the permission of the child's parent or legal guardian, and the child obtains access to the firearm and there by (1) causes death or injury to the child or any other person; (2) carries the firearm off the premises or to a public place, including to any preschool or school grades kindergarten through twelfth grade, or to any school-sponsored event, activity, or performance; or (3) unlawfully brandishes the firearm to others.
 - Note: The criminal penalty may be significantly greater if someone dies or suffers great bodily injury as a result of the child gaining access to the firearm.
- With very limited exceptions, California also makes it a crime for a person to negligently store or leave any firearm, loaded or unloaded, on their premises in a location where the person knows or reasonably should know that a child is likely to gain access to it without the permission of the child's parent or legal guardian, unless reasonable action is taken to secure the firearm against access by the child, even when a minor never actually accesses the firearm.
- In addition to potential fines and terms of imprisonment, as of January 1, 2020, a gun owner found criminally liable under these California laws faces prohibitions from possessing, controlling, owning, receiving, or purchasing a firearm for 10 years.
- Finally, a parent or guardian may also be civilly liable for damages resulting from the discharge of a firearm by that person's child or ward.

Parents and guardians are urged to have open conversations with their children about gun safety and to teach them the importance of never touching firearms without adult supervision. Students are also encouraged to report any suspicious behavior or concerns related to firearms to school administrators or local law enforcement authorities.

To view the PSA, please visit the District Attorney's Office YouTube Channel:

[Gun Safe Storage | It's The Law - YouTube](#).

English: <https://youtu.be/CUF3u5XdYbs>

Spanish: <https://youtu.be/E4PooHBWvI4>

Download videos: <https://we.tl/t-vsm7Wb66DD>