



Midland Health & Senior Services Public Health Preparedness Program

Texas J-RAC Prevention and Education Committee

## Accidental Weapon Discharge

**Accidental discharge** is the event of a firearm discharging (firing) at a time not intended by the user.

### Key Facts and Statistics

- Injuries are the leading cause of death for Texas residents under 45 years of age.
- Unintentional injuries comprise two thirds of these deaths.
- Accidental Weapon Discharge is one of the five leading causes of fatal accidents in Public Health Service Region 9 /10. This region encompasses the J-RAC, the Border RAC and the Concho Valley RAC.
- Most accidental discharges occur when the trigger of the firearm is deliberately pulled for a purpose other than shooting—dry-fire practice, demonstration, or function testing—but ammunition is mistakenly left in the chamber.
- The leading cause of firearm-related hunting accidents and deaths was hunter judgment factors (51% of firearm-related hunting accidents and deaths). The leading cause among hunter judgment factors was the accidental shooting of another while the shooter was “swinging on game.”
- Thirty-one percent of firearm-related hunting accidents and 36% of deaths were caused by poor hunter skill and aptitude, with the most common reason for accidents and deaths in this category being the careless handling of a firearm.
- Eleven percent of firearm-related hunting accidents and 5% of deaths were caused by miscellaneous factors such as ricocheted bullets.
- Seven percent of firearm-related hunting accidents were caused by basic safety and law violations such as removing/placing a loaded firearm in a vehicle.
- Most firearm-related hunting deaths occurred with a rifle, followed by a shotgun. Much lower numbers of firearm-related hunting accidents and deaths occurred with a handgun or a muzzleloader.

### Sources:

- <http://www.responsivemanagement.com/download/reports/Firearmaccidentsreport.pdf>
- [Texas Department of State Health Services Center for Health Statistics](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau population estimates](#)
- <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/injury/data/>
- Epidemiology News

### Inside this issue:

Accidental  
Weapon Discharge **1**

Safe Weapon  
Handling Guidelines **2**

Four things YOU  
can do to prevent falls **3**

Holiday Cooking:  
Keep it Safe **4**



### The Vital Four ACTS of Firearm Safety

- **A**ssume every firearm is loaded
- **C**ontrol the muzzle direction at all times
- **T**rigger finger must be kept off the trigger and out of the trigger guard
- **S**ee that the firearm is unloaded

### PROVE it safe.

- **P**oint the firearm in the safest available direction
- **R**emove all ammunition
- **O**bserve the chamber
- **V**erify the feeding path
- **E**xamine the bore each time you pick up a firearm

## Safe Weapon Handling Guidelines

- **ALWAYS treat firearms as if they are loaded**  
This rule is a matter of keeping a certain mindset. The purpose is to create safe handling habits, and to discourage reasoning along the lines of, "I know my gun is unloaded so certain unsafe practices are OK." The proposition "the gun is *always* loaded" is used as a shorthand, even though it may be assumed—or even positively known—that this is not true of a particular firearm.
- **ALWAYS point the muzzle away from non-targets**  
This rule is intended to minimize the damage caused by an unintended discharge. The first rule teaches that a firearm must be assumed to be ready to fire. This rule goes beyond that and says, "Since the firearm *might* fire, assume that it *will* and make sure no harm occurs when it does."
- **ALWAYS keep fingers off the trigger**  
This rule is intended to prevent an undesired discharge. Normally a firearm is discharged by pressing its trigger. A handler's finger may involuntarily move for any of several reasons: the handler is startled, a lack of full attention on body movements, physiological reasons beyond conscious control such as a spasm, stumbling or falling, or the finger being pushed by something (as when trying to holster a handgun with one's finger on the trigger).
- **ALWAYS keep the gun unloaded until ready to use.**  
Whenever you pick up a gun, immediately engage the safety device if possible, and, if the gun has a magazine, remove it before opening the action and looking into the chamber( which should be clear of ammunition. If you do not know how to open the action or inspect the chamber, leave the gun alone and get help from someone who does.
- **ALWAYS be sure of your target and of what is beyond it**  
This rule is intended to eliminate or minimize damage to non-targets when a firearm is intentionally discharged. Unintended damage may occur if a non-target is mis-identified as a target, if the target is missed, or if the bullet hits something or someone other than the intended target.

#### Sources:

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gun\\_safety#Treat\\_firearms\\_as\\_if\\_they\\_are\\_loaded](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gun_safety#Treat_firearms_as_if_they_are_loaded)
- NRA Gun Safety Rules: <http://www.nrahq.org/education/guide.asp>.
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police. [The Vital Four ACTS of Firearm Safety](#)".

## FALL INJURIES IN THE WORKPLACE

- Falls are a persistent hazard found in all occupational settings. A fall can occur during the simple acts of walking or climbing a ladder to change a light fixture or as a result of a complex series of events affecting an ironworker 80 feet above the ground. According to the 2009 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 605 workers were killed and an estimated 212,760 workers were seriously injured by falls to the same or lower level.
- The highest frequency of fall-related fatalities was experienced by the construction industry, while the highest counts of nonfatal fall injuries continue to be associated with the health services and the wholesale and retail industries. Healthcare support, building cleaning and maintenance, transportation and material moving, and construction and extraction occupations are particularly at risk of fall injuries.

## Four things YOU can do to prevent falls

### 1 Begin a regular exercise program

Exercise is one of the most important ways to lower your chances of falling. It makes you stronger and helps you feel better. Exercises that improve balance and coordination (like Tai Chi) are the most helpful. Lack of exercise leads to weakness and increases your chances of falling. Ask your doctor or health care provider about the best type of exercise program for you.

### 2 Have your health care provider review your medicines

Have your doctor or pharmacist review all the medicines you take, even over-the-counter medicines. As you get older, the way medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you sleepy or dizzy and can cause you to fall.

### 3 Have your vision checked

Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year. You may be wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition like glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling.

### 4 Make your home safer

About half of all falls happen at home. To make your home safer:

- Remove things you can trip over (like papers, books, clothes, and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping. Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Have grab bars put in next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well.
- Hang light-weight curtains or shades to reduce glare.
- Have handrails and lights put in on all staircases.
- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house.
- Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.

Sources:

[http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/pubs/English/brochure\\_Eng\\_desktop-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/pubs/English/brochure_Eng_desktop-a.pdf)

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/falls/>

## Holiday Cooking: Keep it Safe

As the holidays approach we like to celebrate by entertaining friends and family, throwing parties, and preparing feasts. From a buffet table to an office party, food moves center stage throughout the holiday season. Be sure to keep food safe by following basic food safety steps:

**Clean:** Wash hands and food-contact surfaces often. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, knives, sponges, and counter tops.

**Separate:** Don't cross-contaminate and allow bacteria spread to from one food product to another. This is especially true for raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.

**Cook:** Cook to proper temperatures. Foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause food-borne illness.

**Chill:** Refrigerate promptly after use. Refrigerating foods keeps harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Refrigerators should be set at 40 degrees Fahrenheit and freezers at 0 degrees Fahrenheit. The accuracy of refrigerator and freezer settings should be checked occasionally with a thermometer.

Visit the following websites for more information about food safety:

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/food\\_safety\\_education/thermy/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/food_safety_education/thermy/index.asp)

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Countdown\\_to\\_the\\_Holiday/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Countdown_to_the_Holiday/index.asp)

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Roasting\\_Those\\_Other\\_Holiday\\_Meats/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Roasting_Those_Other_Holiday_Meats/index.asp)

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/news/1999/0457-99.htm>

<http://www.fightbac.org/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/>

<http://www.foodsafety.gov/>

US Department of Agriculture Meat and Poultry Hotline:  
1-800-535-4555 (Toll-free Nationwide)  
1-800-256-7072 (TDD/TTY)  
E-mail: [mp hotline.fsis@usda.gov](mailto:mp hotline.fsis@usda.gov)

### Sources:

- <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/>
- <http://www.foodsafety.gov/>

