

Safety Note #116

FIREARM CLEANING SAFETY



*Photograph Courtesy of
Hopland REC*

Information available from the California Department of Health Services indicates that between 2000 and 2004, an annual average of 66 Californians were unintentionally killed by firearms. An annual average of 4,150 people suffered unintentional firearm injuries that required hospitalization during the same time period. Data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate about 70 percent of the unintentional firearm injuries are self inflicted and involve gunshot wounds to arms, hands, legs, and/or feet. Unintentional firearm injuries or fatalities usually

happen while a person is carrying a loaded gun or during the routine cleaning, loading, or unloading of a gun.

Firearm Cleaning Safety

- Firearms should be cleaned after each use and whenever a firearm has been stored for a long time.
- Prior to starting, thoroughly review and understand information provided in the firearm owner's manual with particular attention given to descriptions of firearm cleaning procedures.
- Always assure the firearm is unloaded before beginning to clean the weapon. Remove magazines or clips from the firearm and inspect cylinders and/or chambers for loaded rounds.
- Never take apart a firearm past what the owner's manual recommends.
- After disassembling, inspect firearm parts for damage or excessive wear. If a firearm fails the inspection, notify your group leader, parent, or guardian and do not use the weapon. Take the firearm to a professional gunsmith for repairs.
- Use a muzzle guard to keep brushes and cleaning rods centered within the firearm bore.
- When possible, clean the bore of the firearm from the breech end. Pull cleaning patches through the bore from the muzzle end of the firearm. Properly dispose of used cleaning patches.
- Use the appropriate type of brush and cleaning solvent to clean fouled or dirty areas such as on and around a firearm's action, bolt, trigger assembly, frame, or sightsight.
- Store reusable cleaning cloths that have been used with a solvent in a sealed jar or other container. Properly dispose of other, non-reusable, cleaning cloths that have been used with a solvent.
- After cleaning, lightly lubricate the firearm bore and moving parts with an appropriate lubricant.
- Carefully reassemble the firearm and double check to assure all mechanical actions are functioning correctly.
- Following reassembly, wipe the outside surfaces of the firearm to remove all fingerprints and thereby, prevent rusting of metal parts.
- Always wash your hands after handling gun cleaning solvents and lubricants.
- At the completion of the cleaning task, store the unloaded firearm in a locked cabinet or other type of container that is at a separate location from the weapon's ammunition.