

# FIREARM INJURIES

## Facts about firearm injuries in Utah

- ▶ On average, 220 Utah residents die, 100 are hospitalized, and 180 are treated in emergency departments (ED) for firearm injuries each year.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ 82% of firearm deaths are due to suicide, 15% are homicides, 2% are undetermined/other, and 1% are unintentional.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ More than half of all suicides and homicides among Utah residents are committed with a firearm.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Firearms are the most common type of weapon used in domestic violence homicides.<sup>2</sup>

## 2001-2005 UTAH FIREARM INJURY DATA

### SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

#### WHAT

- 1,105 deaths.<sup>1</sup>
- 484 hospitalizations.<sup>1</sup>
- 902 ED visits.<sup>1</sup>

#### WHO

- Males sustained nearly 90% of deaths, hospitalizations, and ED visits related to firearm injuries.<sup>1</sup>
- The 15-24-year age group had the highest number of firearm deaths, hospitalizations, and ED visits.<sup>1</sup>

#### WHEN

- Nationally, unintentional shootings among children occur most often when children are unsupervised in the late afternoon, on weekend days, and during the summer months.<sup>3</sup>

#### WHERE

- Residents of Emery, Carbon, Grand, and Sanpete Counties had the highest rates of firearm deaths.<sup>1</sup>
- Residents of Sevier, Uintah, Tooele, and Carbon Counties had the highest rates of firearm hospitalizations.<sup>1</sup>
- Residents of Garfield, Beaver, Millard, and Juab Counties had the highest rates of firearm ED visits.<sup>1</sup>
- 50% of unintentional childhood shooting deaths occur in the home of the victim, and nearly 40% occur at a friend or relative's house. Most of these deaths involve guns that were kept loaded and accessible to children.<sup>3</sup>

#### HOW MUCH

- Hospital charges for firearm injuries in Utah were over \$12.4 million, for an average of \$25,700 per patient.<sup>1</sup>



### What to Teach Your Child About Gun Safety

Teach your child if they find a gun to:

**STOP!**

**Don't Touch.**

**Leave the Area.**

**Tell an Adult.<sup>4</sup>**

Children are naturally curious, especially when it comes to guns. All parents must take common sense steps to protect children, both by talking to them about guns and by unloading and locking all firearms so that a child cannot access them without direct adult supervision.

## FIREARM SAFETY RULES<sup>4</sup>

- **ALWAYS keep the firearm pointed in a safe direction.** A safe direction means that the firearm is pointed so that, even if it were to go off, it would not cause injury or damage.
- **ALWAYS keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.**
- **ALWAYS keep the firearm unloaded until ready to use.**

## FIREARM STORAGE<sup>5</sup>

All firearm owners should:

- Store firearms unloaded and locked up.
- Lock and store ammunition separately.
- Hide keys where children are unable to find them.

## RISKS OF FIREARMS IN THE HOME

- Gun owners cite two main reasons for having a gun: self-protection and hunting.<sup>6</sup> However, for every one time a gun in a home was used in self-defense, there were four unintentional shootings, seven criminal assaults or homicides, and eleven attempted or completed suicides.<sup>7</sup>
- The availability of firearms in the home is associated with an increased risk of suicide,<sup>8</sup> domestic violence homicide,<sup>9</sup> homicide,<sup>10</sup> and unintentional shooting death.<sup>11</sup>

## UTAH FIREARM INJURY EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE 1: A teenager intentionally shot himself with a family gun that was stored in his room.

**PREVENTION: Lock up guns and ammunition separately. Be aware of family mental health problems and get help promptly.**

EXAMPLE 2: An adult male shot and killed his estranged wife and then himself.

**PREVENTION: Call the Domestic Violence Link Line at 1-800-897-5465 for help.**

EXAMPLE 3: Two boys found their parents' loaded handgun and were playing with it when the 4-year-old shot and killed his younger brother.

**PREVENTION: Children as young as two can find and fire weapons. Store firearms unloaded, locked up and out of children's reach. Store ammunition in a separate, locked location. Keep gun storage keys and lock combinations hidden in a separate location.**

EXAMPLE 4: A boy was killed when he and a friend were playing with a loaded handgun in a house.

**PREVENTION: Talk to parents of children's friends about gun storage before allowing a child to play at their homes.<sup>12</sup>**

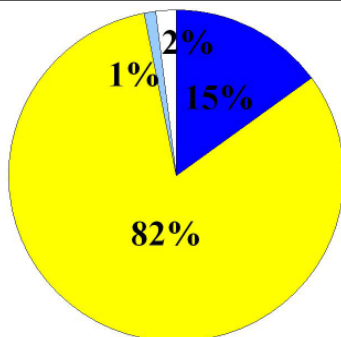
EXAMPLE 5: A toddler used his father's unlocked and loaded handgun to shoot at a group of playmates. No one was injured in the incident.

**PREVENTION: Parents must take responsibility for gun safety in their home because they are the primary protectors of their children.**

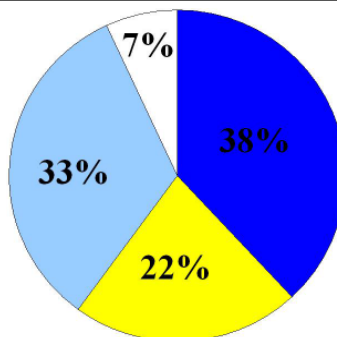
EXAMPLE 6: A teen hunting rabbits missed his target and shot a member of his hunting party.

**PREVENTION: While hunting, if in doubt, don't shoot.**

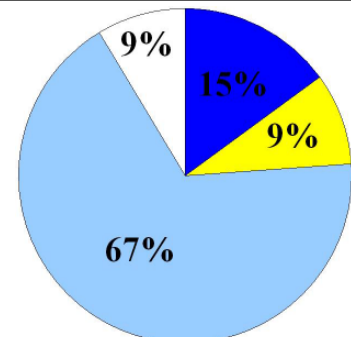
Utah Firearm Deaths, 2001-05<sup>1</sup>



Utah Firearm Hospitalizations, 2001-05<sup>1</sup>



Utah Firearm ED Visits, 2001-05<sup>1</sup>



Suicide/Self-inflicted



Homicide/assault



Unintentional



Other

1 Utah Department of Health, <http://ibis.health.utah.gov>. 2 VIPP. Domestic Violence Fatalities in Utah 2000-2002. 3 Safe Kids USA, [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org). 4 National Rifle Association, [www.nrahq.org](http://www.nrahq.org). 5 JAMA 2005;293:707-14. 6 LDI Issue Brief 2003;8(8):1-4. 7 J Trauma 1998;45:263-7. 8 N Engl J Med 1992;327:467-72. 9 N Engl J Med 1993;329:1084-91. 10 Am J Epidemiol 2004;160:929-36. 11 Accid Anal Prev 2003;35:711-6. 12 Asking Saves Kids Campaign, [www.paxusa.org/ask/index.html](http://www.paxusa.org/ask/index.html).