

# FIREARM SAFETY MATTERS

## FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**VA**



## WHY SUICIDE & FIREARM SAFETY MATTERS

**Thank you for making the important decision of obtaining this cable lock.**

Though Veterans are well-versed in firearm safety, all owners should understand that during emotional or stressful times limiting access to their firearms could prevent suicide.

A locked firearm can mean the difference between a tragic outcome and a life saved for someone in crisis.

Information on safe firearm storage and additional suicide prevention resources are provided in this pamphlet.

**Firearm locks can prevent a crisis from becoming fatal.**

**Veterans  
Crisis Line**



**1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1**  
**or Text to 838255**  
**or Chat online:**

**[www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat)**

## SUICIDE & FIREARMS: FACTS THAT MATTER

- ✓ Firearms are in the **TOP 5** leading causes of injury-related deaths.
- ✓ About **1/2** of all suicides are by firearm.
- ✓ Nationally, suicides account for roughly **2 OUT OF EVERY 3** firearm deaths.  
– Center for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2013
- ✓ Veterans and Servicemembers most frequently used **FIREARMS** to end their lives.  
– Department of Defense Suicide Event Report, 2014  
– VA Suicide Data Report, 2016
- ✓ Approximately **85%** of suicide attempts with a firearm are fatal.  
– Center for Disease Control and Prevention Surveillance for Fatal and Nonfatal Injuries, 2001

✓ Evidence suggests those living in households where firearms are stored **LOCKED** have a lower risk of suicide than those where firearms are stored unlocked.

– Conwell et al, *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry*, 2002; Shenassa et al, *J Epidemiol Community Health*, 2004; Grossman et al, *JAMA*, 2005



## WHY THIS LOCK MATTERS



Firearm cable locks can provide critical life-saving moments between *impulse* and **ACTION**.

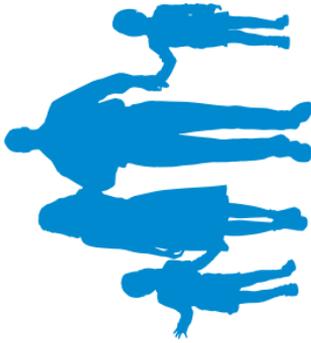
This lock can mean the difference between a life lost and

- ✓ Spending time with family and friends
- ✓ Enjoying your kids/grandkids and watching them grow up
- ✓ Doing what you want to do in life
- ✓ Remembering who and what you love, and who loves you

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**Every Veteran's Life Matters. Your Life Matters.**

# KEEP YOURSELF SAFE FOR THOSE WHO MATTER



Family



Companion



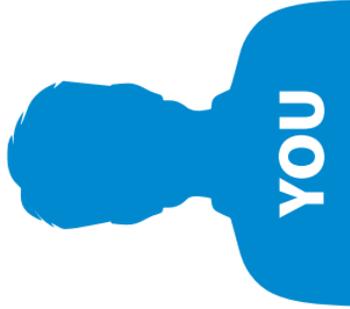
Neighbors and  
Community



Pets



Friends



Fellow Veterans

# LEARN TO RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF SUICIDE RISK



**If you or a Veteran you care about is showing any of these warning signs, take extra precautions with firearms and reach out to the Veterans/Military Crisis Line.**



**Veterans  
Crisis Line**

**1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1**

Text to 838255

- ✓ Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
- ✓ Looking for ways to kill yourself
- ✓ Talking about death, dying, or suicide
- ✓ Self-destructive behavior, such as drug or alcohol use
- ✓ Hopelessness – feeling like there is no way out, no reason to live
- ✓ Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, mood swings, rage, or anger
- ✓ Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- ✓ Withdrawing from family or friends

## WHEN A VETERAN IS IN CRISIS



Everyone can play a role in preventing suicide. If you or a fellow Veteran is feeling distressed, depressed, hopeless, or suicidal, it can be overwhelming in the moment. One phone call can save a life!

**WHAT WE KNOW:** Many suicide attempts occur with little planning during a short-term crisis. When someone feels overwhelmed in crisis, impulsive actions could tragically mean a life lost to suicide.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### **FIREARM LOCKS CAN PREVENT A CRISIS FROM BECOMING FATAL.**

Help is available anytime. If you or someone you love experiences warning signs of a crisis, stay with them and call the Veterans/Military Crisis Line:

**1-800-273-8255 Press 1**

For urgent safety concerns, call **911** or go to the nearest emergency room.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

During high-risk periods, **TEMPORARY OFF-SITE STORAGE** may be the safest option.\* If off-site storage is not an option, any step that increases the time and distance between a suicidal impulse and a firearm will reduce suicide risk.



If you are storing a locked firearm in your household during high-risk periods or a crisis, ask a trusted friend or family member to keep the key to this lock for you, or ask them to change the combination on the safe or lock.

**\*NOTE:** There is significant state variability in laws regulating firearm transfers. Please familiarize yourself with local and state laws regarding firearm transfers.

## ADDITIONAL STORAGE OPTIONS

**A TRIGGER LOCK** prevents unauthorized access by blocking the trigger mechanism. A trigger lock should never be applied to a loaded firearm as it can cause it to unintentionally discharge.

**A LOCK BOX or /SAFE** secures a firearm from unauthorized access. Firearms should be stored unloaded and separate from ammunition.

Firearms can also be temporarily **DISASSEMBLED** (e.g., remove the firing pin) to prevent or delay firearm access during high-risk periods.

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**Discuss storage options with Veterans and loved ones in your life.**

**Determine what is best for ensuring safety in your home.**

## FIREARM SAFETY CHECKLIST



Properly storing your firearm and ammunition can reduce the **RISK OF SUICIDE AND UNINTENTIONAL INJURY** to Veterans and loved ones in your life.

- ✓ Keep firearms unloaded and ammunition in a place that cannot be accessed by children and unauthorized adults.
- ✓ Store ammunition separate from firearms.
- ✓ Regularly reassess to ensure safe storage of firearms, especially during periods of increased stress or emotional crisis.
- ✓ When someone feels overwhelmed in a crisis, firearm cable locks can provide critical life-saving moments between impulse and action.

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**Responsible firearm owners prevent suicide.**

## BEFORE USING YOUR FIREARM CABLE LOCK

- 1. UNLOAD THE FIREARM:** Make sure the firearm is completely **UNLOADED**, and any safety mechanism is **ON**. **ALWAYS** keep it pointed in a safe direction and never assume the firearm is unloaded.
- 2. PREP THE LOCK:** Turn the key in a clockwise direction to unlock the provided cable lock. Remove the loose end of the cable from the padlock.



For additional information, please read the **OWNERS MANUAL** for safe handling and storage methods

## HOW TO WORK THE LOCK

1. With the key in the clockwise position, insert the loose end of the cable into the padlock.
2. Turn the key counterclockwise to engage the lock and then remove the key.
3. Always double-check to confirm the cable is locked and secure.
4. Store the key to the firearm cable lock separately from both firearms and ammunition, and in a place that children can't find.

## BASIC SAFETY TIPS

### NEVER PUT THE CABLE LOCK WITHIN THE TRIGGER GUARD.

Do not use the firearm with the cable lock in place.

### BASICS OF SAFE HANDLING INCLUDE:

- ✓ Point the firearm in a safe direction
- ✓ Keep fingers off the trigger
- ✓ Keep unloaded when not in use

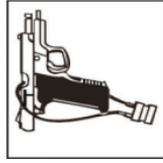


**Remember to keep firearms locked and unloaded when not in use.**

# HOW TO INSTALL CABLE LOCK INTO A FIREARM

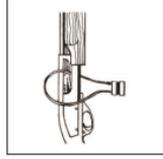
Please reference the attached Instruction Sheet

Make sure ALL firearms are  
UNLOADED before they are put away.



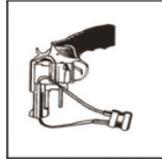
## SEMI AUTOMATIC PISTOLS:

remove the magazine, and with the slide back, insert the cable part through the ejection port and out of the magazine well.

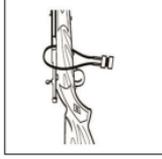


## SEMI AUTOMATIC or PUMP-

**ACTION SHOT FIREARMS:** put the bolt in the open position and insert the cable part through the ejection port and out of the loading port.

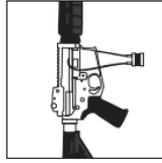


**REVOLVERS:** open the cylinder and insert the cable part through the barrel or through an empty chamber.



## BOLT ACTION RIFLES:

open the action or remove the bolt from the rifle. Then remove the magazine and insert the cable through the ejection port and out of the magazine well or the receiver assembly.



**MODERN SPORTING RIFLE:** With the charging handle and bolt locked back and the magazine removed, insert the cable through the ejection port and out the magazine well.

**This cable lock can be used with many different firearms.**

## RESOURCES



**Rocky Mountain MIRECC for Suicide Prevention Firearm Safety Webpage.** This webpage provides additional information to Veterans and their families about firearm safety for suicide prevention, and the ability to request additional firearm safety cable locks for free. Safe Storage Matters. [www.mirecc.va.gov/vsn19/lethalmeanssafety/](http://www.mirecc.va.gov/vsn19/lethalmeanssafety/)



**Veterans/Military Crisis Line.** If you or someone you know is in crisis, call **1-800-273-8255** (press **1** for Military or Veterans) to be connected with qualified, caring responders 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Many counselors are Veterans themselves, providing confidential support on the toll-free hotline, online chat, and text-messaging service. Text to **838255** or chat online at [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat)



**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.** AFSP encourages suicide prevention education and the use of safe firearm storage options. <https://afsp.org/about-suicide/firearms-suicide-prevention/>



**Suicide Prevention Lifeline.** When you dial **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, you are calling the crisis center in the Lifeline network closest to your location. You will be helped by a skilled, trained crisis worker who will listen to your problems and will tell you about mental health services in your area. Your call is confidential and free.



**Prevención del Suicidio.** Una persona capacitada le escuchará y hablará con usted. Si es necesario, podrá darle información sobre recursos o servicios existentes en su comunidad que podrán prestarle ayuda después de la llamada. Siempre puede usted volver a llamar al número **1-888-628-9454** si lo necesita o lo desea.



**Make the Connection.** Connect with Veterans and find information, support and inspiration to overcome challenges. [www.maketheconnection.net](http://www.maketheconnection.net)



**Suicide Prevention Coordinator.** Contact your local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator for additional information and firearm safety materials. [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator)



**Means Matter.** The Harvard Injury Control Research Center Means Matter campaign is dedicated to activities that promote safety and prevent firearm injury by reducing a suicidal person's access to lethal means. [www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/)

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