

FIREARMS SAFETY AND YOU!!!

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OF THE NWF

Have you gone to a sporting goods store or a gun show to look at firearms with your mom or dad? If you have, you know that it is one of the most fun things you can do, other than shooting a firearm. If you haven't, get busy and talk someone into taking you. It is a wonderful way to spend some time looking and learning. The folks in the stores, or at the gun show booths, love to show you their wares and talk about them. Ask lots of questions. You will find that one question and answer will lead to another.

Sporting goods stores will have mostly new firearms but may have some used. If they aren't busy they are a nice quiet place to look and learn. Gun shows are much bigger and noisier. But they have the widest variety of firearms and everything else related to shooting, new and old. You may even find collectors who bring a collection to the show just so people can see them. There are usually old timers, yep, older than me, who can relate a lot of interesting stories and facts. They love to talk to young folks like you.

You can easily spend several hours at a gun show. Most also have eating areas where you can take a break and sit down and have lunch or a snack.

The last few gun shows I have attended have been really busy. I hear a lot of concern that some our firearm ownership rights (and I mean rights, not privileges) may soon be in jeopardy with the current presidential administration. Let's hope not, but keep that in mind when you are old enough to vote.

As you can see from the title of this column, it is about firearms safety. So how does that apply to stores and gun shows? All of their firearms are required to be unloaded. That is probably correct. But what are the first and second commandments of firearms safety?

1. ALWAYS POINT THE MUZZLE IN A SAFE DIRECTION
2. TREAT EVERY GUN AS IF IT IS LOADED

I constantly see these two commandments violated in stores and at gun shows. As I have said before, what we practice is what we do without thinking. If we always practice safety, we will be more likely to be safe when it counts.

I have seen store customers look at a pistol and have it pointed right at the clerk who handed it to them. It makes me cringe, partially from the fact that a firearm is pointed at someone, and partially from the fact that the person holding the firearm must not know what they are doing and may not practice safety in the field either.

Gun shows are even worse. With the crowded areas, especially now, it is harder to be safe, but it can be done if you think about what you are doing. You can look at a pistol with the barrel pointed up just as well as with the barrel level and pointed at someone – same with a rifle.

Most store clerks check to see that a firearm is unloaded before handing it to a customer and you should verify that after it is handed to you, just as you would do anywhere else. You should do the same at a gun show.

There is some etiquette you should follow at a gun show:

- Always ask permission before picking **anything** up
- Practice safety
- Handle it carefully
- If you want to be seen as a very considerate person get a silicon cloth and take it with you to wipe firearms off after handling them, just as you should do with yours at home

Enjoy looking and learning and doing so safely.

