

## **Firearm Education**

Safety in general is largely a matter of education and home firearms safety is certainly no exception. The head of the house must teach safe gun handling to all family members. Without proper education, preventive measures are nearly useless.

Children are never too young to begin the lessons of safety. Teaching can begin long before the child is old enough to understand detailed instruction. Start by setting a proper and consistent example. If parents treat guns with care and respect, children will likely follow their lead.

The second stage is more difficult, but well worth the effort. It involves convincing the child that firearms are not toys. Having noticed adult interest in guns, children will naturally develop a healthy curiosity about their use and operation. In addition, children tend to have an entirely unrealistic idea of what guns are all about because of exposure to modern realistic toys and to the fantasies of television. The quickest and surest way to show youngsters the power of firearms is by demonstration. Take them to the local range, fire a few rounds of high velocity ammunition at closed gallon cans of water, and show them the results.

It is a serious mistake to assume that keeping children ignorant will prevent accidents. Nothing could be further from the truth. Where firearms are concerned, there is no such thing as blissful ignorance. Keeping youngsters in the dark only insures that they will not understand the potential danger and increases the likelihood that they will seek to satisfy their curiosity without proper supervision. Also, the hazards that the parent wishes to eliminate are greatly increased if the child does not know how firearms function.

A good rule for children is: "Hands Off" until they are old enough to be taught safe gun handling, and then only in the presence of an adult -- NEVER while playing with other children.

As soon as a child is old enough, he or she should be enrolled in one of the many firearms safety classes sponsored by sportsmen's groups across the country. These courses provide excellent training and serve to reinforce the lessons learned at home.