

## South Lake Minnetonka Police Department urges gun safety

By **Chris Dillmann** on March 26, 2013 at 10:10 am

*Free gunlocks provided by department*



As the gun debate continues on the national and local level, the South Lake Minnetonka Police Department is making sure people are properly informed on gun safety.

The SLMPD launched “Operation Lock and Unload,” which not only educates people applying for gun permits, but also provides free gunlocks. This is in conjunction with Project ChildSafe, a nationwide program whose purpose is to promote safe firearms handling and storage practices among all firearms owners through the distribution of safety education messages and free firearm safety kits.

The gunlocks are provided free by the South Lake Minnetonka Police Department. (Sun Staff Photo by Chris Dillmann)

Chief Bryan Litsey says the permits have nearly tripled from Dec. 14 to Feb. 6 during the same time frame last year.

With more gun permits being requested, Litsey says it’s imperative to make sure people are informed on what it means to own and possess a firearm.

“Some people caught up in the frenzy didn’t fully understand the obligations and responsibilities that go along with gun ownership,” Litsey said. “It’s not like going out and buying a TV, this can be lethal if they don’t take the proper precautions to keep them secure, it could create a real public safety issue.”

According to Protect Minnesota, an organization working to end gun violence, 44.7 percent of Minnesota households contain firearms.

Litsey says it's not only a law in Minnesota to have firearms properly stored, but a matter of public safety. This is especially true for keeping firearms out of the hands of children. Like Christmas presents, if a child knows there is a gun in the household and wants to find it, he often will.

"It's kind of naïve to think if you hide a gun a child won't get access to it," Litsey said.

Protect Minnesota says between two and three children in the state is killed by gun violence each week.

Also, those who have firearms in case of home burglaries, often find that the guns are used against them. He says it's more likely something goes wrong with firearms than the good they can be used to protect somebody.

In Hennepin County, nearly one gun a day is stolen, and 78 percent of those stolen guns were completely unlocked, according to a 2005 Stolen Guns, Street Guns report.

"The reality is there are just more guns out there now and everybody needs to do their part to keep them from falling in the wrong hands," Litsey said.

Emotionally distraught individuals are also at risk for wrong use of guns, with the majority of gun deaths, 73 percent, being a result from suicide, Litsey said.

Proper safeguards include unloading the firearm, using a trigger or cable lock and placing the gun in a lock box or safe. Ammunition should be securely stored away from the firearm.

"We're trying to educate more as people come in to get the permit, not to preach, but to make them aware," Litsey said.

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