

# KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON SAFELY



**Suicide is preventable. Safely securing firearms and other lethal means, especially in the midst of a crisis, **will save lives.****

## DID YOU KNOW?

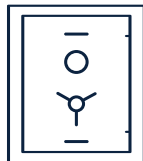
- Most who died by suicide were facing an emotional crisis, such as a failed relationship or disciplinary action.
- Many were under the influence of alcohol, increasing their impulsive decision to die.
- Most didn't want to die; they wanted their pain to end.
- End state: Safe storage – especially during times of emotional distress, saves lives.

### CABLE LOCK



PREVENTS FIREARM FROM  
BEING LOADED AND FIRED

### FULL-SIZED GUN SAFE



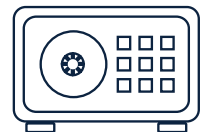
ALLOWS YOU TO STORE  
MULTIPLE FIREARMS  
SAFELY IN ONE PLACE

### GUN CASE



OFFERS A STORAGE  
SOLUTION TO SECURE,  
CONCEAL, PROTECT, AND  
LEGALLY TRANSPORT  
A FIREARM

### LOCKBOX



PROVIDES RELIABLE  
PROTECTION FOR  
FIREARMS

## RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

- For non-crisis help, contact [Military OneSource](https://www.militaryonesource.com) (Dial 800-342-9647).
- Service members, Veterans, and their family members can call the [Military/Veterans Crisis Line](https://www.militarycrisisline.com), available 24/7, if they are in distress or experiencing a suicidal crisis (Dial 988, Press 1).
- For additional resources available through your local MCCS installation, visit: [www.usmc-mccs.org/protect](https://www.usmc-mccs.org/protect).



# LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

## WHAT ARE LETHAL MEANS?

Lethal means are objects like firearms, medications, alcohol, other substances, ropes, cords, or sharp objects that can be used during a suicidal crisis to inflict self-directed violence or injury.

## WHAT IS LETHAL MEANS SAFETY?

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) defines lethal means safety as “intentional, voluntary practices accomplished with the intention of reducing suicide risk by limiting access to lethal means.”
- Educating individuals regarding lethal means safety and applying the safety elements prior to or during a suicidal crisis can delay the process and decrease the chance individuals will die by suicide.
- When someone is in a suicidal crisis, the period between ideation and action is often brief and short-lived. Thus, delaying the process can decrease the chance of the individual dying by suicide. It is important to educate individuals regarding this brief period to better manage when a crisis occurs.

**IF YOU BELIEVE A PERSON IS SUICIDAL, CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY.  
IF THE SITUATION IS CONCERNING BUT NOT AN EMERGENCY, OFFER OPTIONS**

- Call 988, the new shortcut to the National Suicide Hotline.
- Call the Military/Veterans Crisis Line at 988, then press 1.
- Contact your local Community Counseling Center.



# SAFE STORAGE

FOR LETHAL MEANS  
**AND**  
HOUSEHOLD ITEMS



## FIREARMS

- Firearms are the most common method of suicide in the Marine Corps.
- Use cable locks to prevent a firearm from being loaded and fired. Cable locks may be available at your installation. Check with your command Suicide Prevention Program Officer (SPPO).
- Store firearms with local police department, gun shop, or shooting range. Some local and state laws require weapon registration for legal storage; always follow the law in your jurisdiction.
- Lock up firearms and put the key in a lock box and give the key to a friend until the crisis has passed.
- Ask a family member, friend, or neighbors to safely store firearms as necessary.

## DRUGS & ALCOHOL

- Do not keep lethal doses of medications on-hand. Discuss both prescription and non-prescription medications with your doctor or pharmacist. Your pharmacist can advise you on safe quantities.
- Consider locking up all medications. Medication lock boxes are available online and in many pharmacies.
- Dispose of medications that are no longer needed or are outdated. Go to any military or non-military pharmacy or local law enforcement to safely dispose of unwanted, unused, or expired prescription or over-the-counter medications at any local drug take-back program drop box.
- Keep only small quantities of alcohol in the home. Drinking alcohol while taking medications can be lethal and can lead to impulsive choices such as a suicide attempt.



## HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- Potentially dangerous household items should be put in a locked cabinet or space away from children or those that may wish to harm themselves.
- While we may not think of household items as "lethal means", many items can be dangerous. Some of these household items include:
  - Bleach
  - Detergent
  - Mothballs
  - Spray Paint
  - Aerosol Cans
  - Pesticides
  - Gasoline
  - Adhesives

**Suicide is complicated and tragic, but it's also preventable—and safe storage is one effective approach to reduce suicide and protect yourself and your family.**



**Suicide attempts can result from impulsive reactions to stress. Limiting access to lethal means during moments of impulsivity can be life-saving.**

## **OPTIONS FOR FIREARM SAFETY**

- Use cable locks to prevent a firearm from being loaded and fired. Cable locks may be available at your installation. Check with your command Suicide Prevention Program Officer (SPPO).
- Store firearms at an installation/unit armory.
- Store firearms with local police department, gun shop, or shooting range. Some local and state laws require weapon registration for legal storage; always follow the law in your jurisdiction.
- Lock up firearms and put the key in a lock box or give the key to a friend until the crisis has passed.
- Ask a family member, friend, or neighbors to safely store firearms as necessary.



### **TIP #1**

**CABLE LOCKS** prevent a firearm from being loaded and fired.



### **TIP #2**

**GUN CASES** are used to secure, conceal, and legally transport guns.



### **TIP #3**

**LOCK BOXES** provide reliable protection for firearms.



### **TIP #4**

**GUN SAFES** allow you to store multiple firearms in one place.



**Be smart about  
the storage  
of medications.**

**Overdoses  
of medications are  
the most common  
method  
of nonfatal  
suicide attempts.**



## **SAFETY TIPS FOR MEDICATION STORAGE**

- **Do not keep lethal doses of medications on-hand.** Discuss both prescription and non-prescription medications with your doctor or pharmacist. Your pharmacist can advise you on safe quantities.
- **At-home disposal.** Empty medications into a small plastic bag mixed with water and an undesirable substance (e.g., kitty litter or used coffee grounds) and throw the bag in the trash. Cross out all personal information from the label before discarding the bottle.
- **Consider locking up all medications.** Medication lock boxes are available online and in many pharmacies. Be particularly careful about locking up medications that can be abused, such as opioids.
- **Dispose of medications that are no longer needed or are outdated.** Go to any military or non-military pharmacy or local law enforcement to safely dispose of unwanted, unused, or expired prescription or over-the-counter medications at any local drug take-back program drop box.
- **Keep only small quantities of alcohol in the home.** Drinking alcohol while taking medications can be lethal and can lead to impulsive choices such as a suicide attempt.



**If someone is at risk,  
encourage safe storage  
of lethal means until the  
crisis has passed.**

**LETHAL MEANS**

## **LETHAL MEANS FACT SHEET**

### **What are means?**

An object, instrument, and/or method in which one could potentially inflict self-directed violence or injury, whether lethal or non-lethal in intent or by outcome. Examples include firearms, poisons, suffocation, and jumping from buildings or bridges.

### **What is means safety?**

Techniques, policies, and procedures designed to reduce access or availability to lethal means and methods of deliberate self-harm.

### **What is lethal means safety?**

The process of ensuring that lethal means, such as firearms and medications, are removed during times of increased stress, when risk of suicide is heightened.

The term “lethal” is important because some methods are more harmful or destructive than others and used to attempt suicide.

### **Lethal Means Safety Practices**

#### **FIREARMS**

Firearms are the most common method of suicide in the Marine Corps. Store personally owned firearms with a cable lock in a secured safe separate from ammunition. Cable locks may be available at your installation. Check with your command Suicide Prevention Program Officer (SPPO).

#### **MEDICATIONS**

Proactively disposing of unwanted, unused or expired medications is another way to practice lethal means safety (e.g., at-home disposal, locking up all medications, etc.)

#### **OTHER MEANS**

Availability of household objects that can be used in a suicide or suicide attempt is hard to address. If someone is at risk, anything that can be used to anchor or used to tie should be removed. Household chemicals can be locked away or removed.



# **United States Marine Corps Suicide Prevention Program**

## **Lethal Means Safety Fact Sheet**

- Lethal means are an object, instrument, and/or method with which one could inflict self-directed violence or injury. Examples include, but are not limited to, firearms, suffocation (including hanging), poisoning (including prescription and non-prescription medication, illegal drugs, chemicals, and gas), jumps, cutting/piercing, and drowning.
- Lethal means safety includes techniques, policies, and procedures designed to reduce access to, or availability of, lethal means and methods of deliberate self-harm.
- Lethal means safety ensures that lethal means, such as firearms and medications, are removed during times of increased stress when risk of suicide is heightened.
- The term “lethal” is critical because some methods are more harmful or destructive than others used to attempt suicide.
- When individuals are in a suicide-related crisis, this period is often brief and short-lived. Therefore, delaying the process can decrease the chance they will harm themselves. Educating individuals about the brevity of this period will assist them in managing a crisis.
- Building skills (e.g., coping, problem-solving) and strengthening protective factors (e.g., connectedness, community involvement) may lead to lower risk decision-making and potentially decrease suicide attempts.
- Referring Marines to mental wellness resources (e.g., Marine Corps Community Services geo-located resources link ([usmc-mccs.org/services](https://usmc-mccs.org/services))) and providing suicide prevention education to a unit/command may assist with teaching these skills.
- Encouraging Marines to check in with each other regularly can alert them when a Marine has an issue before it becomes overwhelming and allow them to refer that Marine to a chaplain or other helpful resources. Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) teams also can serve as sensors for a commander about Marines’ wellness.
- Paying attention to what people post on social media may help identify people at risk for suicide. Marines who talk about suicide, or who share concerning images on social media, provide others with an opportunity to intervene before a suicidal behavior occurs.