**Gun Safety at Home**

Guns are essential tools for many people living in Alaska. They are necessary for hunting and stocking our freezers as well as for protecting us from wildlife. Most people understand the importance of gun safety, but guns still lead to serious accidents far too often. From 2003 to 2018, 38 children in Alaska died from the accidental firing of a gun and the rate of firearm deaths in Alaska is double the national average.

Gun safety rules for all homes are:

* Always store guns in a gun safe, with a gun lock, or in another secure manner.
* Never store a gun loaded.
* Store ammunition in a locked box in a separate location.
* Always assume a gun is loaded.

Children are curious and often want to “play” with guns. To avoid accidents, children should be taught to not go looking for guns or touch a gun even if it looks like a toy. Parents can ask their neighbors if there are unlocked guns in their house before sending children over to play. If a child finds a gun they should be taught to:

* Stop
* Don’t touch it
* Leave the area
* Tell an adult

Homes that have children and guns can be safe if gun safety precautions are followed properly. To help with this effort, Project Safe Child has free safety kits available at: <https://www.projectchildsafe.org/safety/safety-kit/Alaska>

For more information, please contact the ANTHC Field Environmental Health Program at (907) 729-4043 or ceh@anthc.org.