



# Firearm Safety During a Permanent Change of Station



## MOVING: A TIME OF EXCITEMENT AND STRESS



Military personnel and their families experience permanent change of station (PCS) moves typically every two to three years. While these moves may be welcome as a chance to transfer to new areas, take advantage of career opportunities, reunite with friends and family, or even make some new friends, they can also be stressful. PCS can involve packing, moving, finding a home, changing medical providers, and locating new community resources for your military family.<sup>1</sup> Simple tasks like finding a new grocery store or local coffee shop can be added stressors. Whether a PCS move is across town or to another continent, there is a lot to manage.

## PRACTICE LETHAL MEANS SAFETY TO PROTECT YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES

Military members meet challenges every day, but too much at once can be overwhelming and lead to more intense concerns or even crises. Suicide is a leading cause of death in the U.S. military<sup>2</sup> and the primary means, consistently, is firearms.<sup>3</sup> “Lethal means” is any item that could be used for fatal harm, including suicide. Taking steps to decrease access to lethal means (sometimes referred to as lethal means safety) reduces suicide risk. Safely storing firearms is effective in reducing suicide risk for all household members. Every step between lethal means and potential harm is an opportunity to choose a safer outcome.<sup>4</sup>

### Safe storage of firearms can be done through:



**Securing firearms with a lock, such as a trigger or a cable lock**



**Storing firearms in a locked box, such as a lockbox, gun safe, or gun case**



**Storing ammunition separately in another location**



### FIREARM STORAGE DOES NOT COUNT TOWARDS YOUR HOUSEHOLD GOODS WEIGHT LIMIT

Recognizing that Service members only have a limited prescribed household goods (HHG) weight allowance for PCS moving assistance, the Department of Defense has revised PCS moving policy to allow for empty gun safes (up to 500 pounds) to be exempted from the HHG limit.<sup>5</sup> Service members working to complete their mission and uprooting their homes to do so will now have additional options to help keep themselves and their loved ones safe by being able to safely store their firearms and bring that safety with them during a PCS.

### MORE INFORMATION

Service members and military family members, consider what storage options are right for you and your loved ones' safety. Having your firearms safely locked, stored, and unloaded can help reduce risk and save a life. For more information on lethal means safety, the Defense Suicide Prevention Office provides a [Lethal Means Safety Guide for Military Service Members And Their Families](#); this guide provides additional information on securing other lethal means in your home, how to talk to family to prevent suicide, and provides helpful resources.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

1. Military OneSource – PCS & Military Moves:  
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/moving-pcs/plan-to-move/pcs-and-military-moves/>
2. Military OneSource – Gun Safety in the Home:  
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/military-basics/millife-essentials/gun-safety-in-your-home/>
3. Defense Suicide Prevention Office – Lethal Means Safety:  
<https://www.dspo.mil/Tools/Resource-Library/lethalmeanssafety/>

### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (2019). Strengthening the Military Family Readiness System for a Changing American Society. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25380>

<sup>2</sup>Congressional Research Service. (2022). Trends in Active-Duty Military Deaths From 2006 Through 2021. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/IF10899.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Department of Defense. (2022). Department of Defense Annual Report on Suicide in the Military: Calendar Year 2021. <https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/Documents/2021%20ASR/FY21%20ASR.pdf?ver=1F9QARTc2gfXMGloqum0Mw%3d%3d>

<sup>4</sup>Hoyt, T., Holliday, R., Simonetti, J. A., & Monteith, L. L. (2021). Firearm lethal means safety with military personnel and veterans: Overcoming barriers using a collaborative approach. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 52(4), 387–395. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000372>

<sup>5</sup>Joint Travel Regulations. (2023). <https://www.travel.dod.mil/policy-regulations/joint-travel-regulations/>

*\*REFERENCE TO ANY NON-FEDERAL ENTITIES IN THIS DOCUMENT DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OR ITS OFFICIALS.*



Remember, support is out there, treatment works, and help is within reach.  
**Connect to protect** yourself and those you care about.