



SPORTING ARMS AND AMMUNITION MANUFACTURERS' INSTITUTE, INC.

**United Nations Second Biennial Meeting of States
to Consider the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action
New York, July 13, 2005**

**Statement by Richard Patterson, Managing Director
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"Firearms Safety"

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to speak today. My presentation is on safety and the firearms industry. Firearms safety is not mentioned in the Programme of Action. However, it is an issue the firearms industry considers critical. This view is underscored when you consider the substantial number of firearms lawfully possessed by individuals. In this presentation I will briefly outline industry efforts and successes in my home jurisdiction, the United States. Mr. Chairman, I respectfully suggest that firearms safety is an issue that should be addressed at all levels.

The firearms industry has made safe and responsible ownership of firearms a priority. We have taken a two-pronged approach to this important issue. The first aspect of firearms safety is ensuring the safe operations of the equipment—firearms and ammunition. The second is outreach and firearms safety education of firearms owners and the general public.

These efforts, in conjunction with the safety training and work done by user groups, our sister commercial organizations, and other strategic partners, constitute what I would call a "firearms safety infrastructure." Other people may talk about firearms safety Mr. Chairman – we just do it.

Let me give you an overview of what we do and what we have accomplished so I can offer you a clear understanding of the value as a resource on the issue of firearms safety, not only here in the United States but throughout the world.

SAAMI is an association of manufacturers of sporting firearms, ammunition and components. Since 1926, SAAMI has been setting firearms industry manufacturing standards. Today, SAAMI publishes more than 700 voluntary standards related to the quality and safety of firearms, ammunition and components. When you use firearms and ammunition manufactured to SAAMI specifications, you know everything will operate safely and reliably.

SAAMI is also active in the proposal and review of international and domestic shipping regulations regarding firearms. On the international level, SAAMI works with many groups and organizations, including the United Nations Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transportation of Dangerous Goods. We are proud of the safety record we have built. For instance, the US Department of Transportation has never had a report of an injury caused by transportation of SAAMI-member products.

SAAMI has published numerous brochures, pamphlets and issue papers on a variety of topics that provide a factual perspective on the many complex and sometimes emotional issues surrounding firearms. Technical excellence and accuracy has always been a top priority for SAAMI.

The firearms safety infrastructure in the United States has been very active in outreach and education of the public. Important ingredients for a successful program include the user groups (who have direct access to shooting sports participants), shooting ranges (which provide a "hands-on" opportunity to learn and practice the safe handling of firearms) and the industry.

The firearms industry has created and distributed a number of videotapes and publications that directly address firearms safety. Our most widely distributed publication is "Firearms Safety Depends on You," a booklet that firearms manufacturers package with every one of the millions of sporting firearms produced each year. This booklet highlights safe handling practices. SAAMI has also published and distributed more than 15 million copies of "A Responsible Approach to Firearms Safety," which focuses on safety in both handling and storage of firearms and ammunition in the home. Other pamphlets provide clear guidance on the storage of ammunition and specific components of ammunition like propellant and primers.

The industry has also created and distributes a series of three videotapes geared to different age levels of youths. Many school districts across the United States have embraced these productions, incorporating them into their school curriculum and exposing untold thousands of children to the message of what to do if they come across a firearm. Specifically, leave the area and tell an adult.

Government agencies—at the federal, state and local level—have been important partners with the firearms industry. The most recent of these safety partnerships is Project ChildSafe. Project ChildSafe is an award-winning program for the distribution of free firearm safety kits, funded in part by the United States Department of Justice. The distribution of these kits, which include a safety brochure and gun lock, is done in large part through local law enforcement agencies. To date, Project Childsafe has distributed more than 32 million gun lock safety kits to the public—free of charge.

Have we been successful? Absolutely! Mr. Chairman, statistics reflect that the firearms safety infrastructure in the US has been very effective.

For example,

- Firearm-related accidents in the U.S. have been decreasing consistently over the last 25 years, and dramatically in the last 10 years.
- Over the last decade the rate of firearm-related injuries declined by 67 percent.
- Firearms accidents and accidental fatalities are at the lowest NUMBER since the US National Safety Council began keeping these records in 1903.
- Today, firearms are involved in less than 1 percent of all accidental fatalities in the United States.

This success is even more astounding when you realize that during this same time period both the National Sporting Goods Association and American Sports Data surveys have shown target shooting was one of the top five fastest growing sports. These historic reductions in firearms accidents have occurred at a time when more people are using firearms.

Mr. Chairman, these programs work. They save lives. Given the undeniable importance of firearms safety and given that safety programs can make a difference we would respectfully ask that the benefits and advantages of these types of programs be acknowledged in the report of this meeting.

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