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TIP OF THE WEEK

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RULES FOR SAFELY HANDLING FIREARMS

Before ever touching a firearm, you need to understand the **Four Cardinal Rules of Safe Handling** of a firearm. By following these rules, you can help keep yourself, and those around you, safe.

Owning a firearm is a great responsibility; but a firearm is merely a tool and can be dangerous without proper training. An official training course from an accredited and/or experienced instructor is a great option for firearm owners, but all training starts with an interest to gain knowledge of the basics which include knowing how to load and unload, safely store, and properly care for your firearm. As always, be sure to read your owner's manual completely before starting to use your firearm. The following is a brief overview of the Four Cardinal Rules of Safe Handling of a firearm: (1) assume all are loaded; (2) only point your firearm at your intended target; (3) be certain of your target (and what's behind it); and (4) keep your finger off the trigger, and out of the trigger guard, until you are ready to fire.

CARDINAL RULE #1: ALWAYS TREAT A FIREARM AS IF IT IS LOADED

Before touching or even approaching a firearm, it is important to follow the rule that all firearms are always loaded. Regardless of who used it last, where it came from, or what you may believe, every firearm is loaded at all times until proven otherwise. Until you physically and visually inspect the firearm personally, it should be treated as a live firearm. Physically and visually should include the magazine well and chamber of the firearm. Once it leaves your control, it should be considered a loaded firearm again.

CARDINAL RULE #2: ONLY POINT A FIREARM AT AN INTENDED TARGET

If you aren't willing to fire at something, you shouldn't point a firearm at it. When using a handgun you have to be particularly careful. While shotguns and rifles usually require two hands to change the direction of the muzzle, handguns are prone to being accidentally pointed in the wrong direction.

CARDINAL RULE #3: BE CERTAIN OF YOUR TARGET, BACKSTOP AND BEYOND

When you do decide to aim at something, you must be 100 percent positive of what you're aiming at and always know what is in your line of fire, i.e., between and behind you and your target. Bullets can easily pass through a target and travel long distances. Don't risk anything.

CARDINAL RULE #4: KEEP YOUR FINGER OFF THE TRIGGER, OUT OF THE TRIGGER GUARD UNTIL YOU ARE ON TARGET AND READY TO FIRE

Until you have made the decision to fire, you must keep your finger off of the trigger and outside the guard. Regardless of the type of firearm or situation, your finger never touches the trigger until you are on target and have made the decision to fire. Firearms are designed so they don't discharge until such time the trigger is manually depressed.

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