

Suicide Prevention Through Lethal Means Safety

What is Lethal Means Safety?

Lethal means safety is the process of ensuring that highly lethal means of suicide are out of reach during times of increased stress, when risk of suicide is heightened. Practicing lethal means safety has been proven effective at preventing suicide. Some lethal means include but are not limited to firearms, certain prescription medications and structural hazards such as shower curtain rods, ropes, cords, etc.

Firearms

Firearms are the most common method of suicide in the U.S. and the military due to access and high lethality. However, research shows that when a weapon is less accessible during high-risk periods, the likelihood of an immediate suicide attempt decreases.

As part of a broader DoD strategy to prevent suicide and related tragedies in the military, Navy has released **NAVADMIN 263/14**, stating that commanding officers (COs) and health professionals may ask Sailors who are reasonably believed to be at risk for suicide or causing harm to others to voluntarily allow their privately-owned firearms to be stored for temporary safekeeping. Here's what you should know:

- The Sailor, family, and health professional collaborate on a safety plan limiting access to firearms.
- The CO or health care professional shall not offer incentives, disincentives or coerce the Sailor into turning over their firearm.
- The policy applies to all Sailors (both active and reserve) and is in accordance with Section 1057 of the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2013.

For added safety during times of increased stress, store personally owned firearms with a gun lock in a secured safe separate from ammunition. Gun locks may be available at your installation. Check with your command Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC).



Prescription Drugs

According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, nearly one third of suicide attempts among veterans involve prescription medication. Proactively disposing of unwanted, unused or expired medications is another way to practice lethal means safety, ensuring that they are not misused during stressful times. Navy Drug Detection and Deterrence (NDDD)'s **Prescription for Discharge campaign** recommends two options for proper disposal:

- **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. Printable instructions are also available on the **campaign's webpage**.
- **Drop Box Disposal:** Secure drop boxes are available at certain military treatment facilities (MTFs) for safe, convenient and anonymous disposal of prescription drugs. Visit www.health.mil for more information.

Seeking Help is a Sign of Strength

If you or someone you know is considering suicide, call the Military Crisis Line at 1-800-273-TALK (option 1), text 838255 or visit www.militarycrisisline.net.