



PAWNEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
SHERIFF DARRIN VARNELL

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| Safe Storage of Firearms | |
| <i>This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.</i> | |
| Applicable Oklahoma Statutes: | |
| CALEA Standard: | |
| Date Implemented: | Review Date: |

- I. **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to direct members of The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office with respect to the safe storage of firearms. It has become a fact of life in law enforcement operations that firearms have been stolen from law enforcement Deputies' vehicles; children have played with such weapons; and family members of law enforcement Deputies have used Deputies' weapons as instruments of suicide and homicide.
- II. **Policy:** The policy of The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office is to recognize the inherent danger of firearms and to take reasonable steps to prevent non-agency members from taking control of such firearms. The policy is to direct that all reasonable steps be taken to avoid the theft or use of a member's firearm in order to provide for the safety of our members as well as those who may come into contact with the firearm.
- III. **Definitions:**
 - A. Safe storage locker/area: a lock-box, safe or other specifically designed container which is mounted in a law enforcement facility or home of an deputy rendering it difficult to move and which provides a locking mechanism such that firearms may be safely stored and accessed only by the member.
 - B. Trigger-lock: a locking mechanism which prevents a firearm from being fired while locked.
 - C. Agency firearms- those firearms which are owned by The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office.

D. Personal firearms- firearms owned by members of The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office that have been approved to be carried while on-duty.

IV. **Procedure:** Agency Members are at all times responsible for the security of their firearms. Firearms not being carried or in the immediate physical control of a member shall be secured in a manner which makes them inaccessible to anyone but the member.

A. On-Duty Storage of Firearms

a. **Person:** Members of The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office should be aware that fifteen percent of law enforcement Deputies killed in the line of duty, are shot with their own weapons. Members should be vigilant as to their positioning with respect to all persons with whom they are in contact. In addition:

- i. Members shall carry firearms in a holster which has been approved by The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office at a proper security level.
- ii. No holster shall be worn which has not been approved by The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office.

b. **Deputies :**

i. Members shall carry their handgun on their person and at no time shall a handgun be left unsecured in an unlocked office, unlocked desk or briefcase

c. If a member's office is secured with access limited to sworn members of The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office and is equipped with a safe storage locker, a member may store their firearm consistent with this policy while performing a function that does not require a firearm.

d. **Jail/Holding Facilities:** When entering any jail or holding facility, members shall safely store their firearm in a safe storage locker prior to entry.

- i. If transporting a prisoner to the jail or holding facility, the member shall ensure that their firearm is secured prior to **removing restraints** from the prisoner.
- ii. All members of The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office should familiarize themselves with the policies of area jails to which or from which, prisoners may be transported by The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office.

e. **Interrogation Areas:**

- i. Members shall secure their firearm in a safe-storage locker prior to conducting an interrogation of a suspect in any agency facility.
- ii. The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office shall provide a safe storage locker for the securing of firearms during the interrogation process.

B. Off-Duty Storage of Firearms

a. **Vehicles:** Members shall never leave a firearm unsecured and in plain view in the passenger compartment of any vehicle.

i. **All vehicles:** Except for a rifle or shotgun mounted in an approved theft-proof rack system, firearms shall not be left unattended in the passenger compartment of any vehicle.

ii. **Take Home Vehicles:**

- (a) Handguns shall not be stored in a take home vehicle unless an exigent circumstance exists, or the vehicle is equipped with a functioning lock box. If some exigency exists where a handgun is to be temporarily stored in a take-home vehicle, The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office member shall ensure that the handgun is secured in the trunk of the vehicle and hidden in a manner which makes it difficult to observe when the trunk is open. Deputies should be aware that many vehicles are equipped in a manner that the truck lock can be activated from the passenger compartment. In cases where the firearm must be stored in the trunk without a lockbox or rack, ammunition shall be removed from the firearm and stored separately. Long-guns, which may be necessary for immediate response, may be stored in specially designed theft-proof rack systems.
- (b) If a take home vehicle is to be parked unattended for more than a 24-hour period, all firearms shall be removed and placed in a safe storage locker in the member's home or an agency facility.

iii. Personal Vehicles:

- (a) Agency firearms shall not be stored in a personal vehicle of a member unless some exigent circumstance occurs while The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office member is responding to or from a duty assignment.
- b. Personal firearms must be securely and safely stored at all times and should not be stored in an agency member's vehicle unless some exigent circumstance occurs while The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office member is responding to or from a duty assignment. Deputies should be aware that many vehicles are equipped in a manner that the truck lock can be activated from the passenger compartment. In cases where the firearm must be stored in the trunk without a lockbox or rack, ammunition shall be removed from the firearm and stored separately.
 - i. NOTE: In any case where an deputy determines that exigency makes it necessary to leave a firearm in an unattended vehicle, the firearm shall be secured in the trunk or other non-visible area of the vehicle which is locked.
- c. **Home:** It is recognized by The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office that firearms in any home may be dangerous to non-members residing in the home. This danger is particularly present when the member has children residing in the home or other persons who may be more vulnerable to a firearm i.e. depressed and suicidal persons. It is also recognized that firearms may be subject to theft while in a member's home.
 - i. All members of The Pawnee County Sheriff's Office are directed to identify a safe-storage area for agency firearms and personal firearms approved to be carried while on-duty within their home.
 - ii. The safe-storage area should have limited access such that no person other than the member should have access to this area. Safe storage area for purposes of this provision may include trigger-locks on firearms which would render them inoperable without access to the unlock mechanism.
 - iii. Members are directed that when firearms are not carried on the member's person, they should be immediately locked in the safe-storage area.

iv. Members should make the safe storage of firearms a habit of first priority whenever they enter their home.