TRANSPORTING FIREARMS

Safety: general

June 2003

INTRODUCTION: The Timberlands Manager for a small company in the Pacific Northwest was recently killed when, while opening his truck door, the handgun he carried in his vehicle fell out and accidentally discharged as it hit the ground.

SECURITY BREACH / DAMAGE: On a Sunday, not during company time, the individual was shopping in the small community in which he lived. While opening the door to his vehicle, the 357 Magnum revolver fell to the ground from its stored location in the pocket of the door. Upon impact, the firearm discharged, with the bullet entering the victim’s abdomen and exiting out the shoulder. A passer-by called 911, but the victim expired prior to the emergency crew’s arrival at the scene.

RECOGNITION: A passer-by noticed the victim on the ground and summoned emergency personnel.

ACTIONS TAKEN: The County Major Crime Team, local police, and Sheriff’s Office are investigating. The local District Attorney commented that it appeared to be an accident.

COMMENTS: The company’s policy allowed for the carrying of firearms in company and personal vehicles. In this case the individual’s personal vehicle was used, and mileage for company business was reimbursed.

Whenever firearms are involved, all precautions — and common sense — need to be adhered to at all times. The pocket in the door of a pickup is designed for maps and small items, not for the secure placement of a firearm. Subsequent conversations with associates indicate this was neither the first time the firearm had fallen from its location in the door, nor the first time the firearm had accidentally discharged upon falling. It is always safer to carry the firearm and ammunition separately when transported in a vehicle.

If it is deemed necessary to keep the firearm loaded during transport, store the ammunition in the magazine, and leave the chamber empty to prevent an accidental discharge. Make sure the gun’s safety switch is “ON,” if there is a safety switch.

If you carry a firearm in the course of your normal duties, ensure the firearm is secure at all times and that safeguards are in place to prevent accidental discharge.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Many foresters carry firearms in the woods for a variety of reasons. If you feel the need to carry a firearm in the course of your normal duties, make sure to review your company policy regarding the transport of firearms. Be familiar with your state laws and the laws of adjoining states, as they may vary widely. In certain states, carrying a firearm in the woods during hunting seasons may require a hunting license. If allowed to transport firearms, follow all safety regulations. Suggested safety procedures include:
• take a firearms safety training class,
• obtain a concealed weapons permit if required,
• select a proper and secure transport method,
• use safety switch, if appropriate, and know the status of the ammunition in the firearm or in storage at all times.

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