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of Veterans Affairs

LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

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High-Level Data Points

Veteran Suicide: Number

6,146

Veteran suicide deaths in 2020

Veteran Suicide: Average Per Day

16.8

average number of Veteran suicides per day in 2020

Veteran Suicide: Rate

31.7 per 100,000

unadjusted rate of suicide in 2020 among U.S. Veterans

- Each year from 2001 through 2020, age- and sex-adjusted suicide rates of Veterans exceeded those of non-Veteran U.S. adults.
 - The difference in rates was greatest in 2017, when Veteran adjusted rates were 66.2% greater than those of non-Veteran adults.
 - In 2020, this differential fell to 57.3%.



What is Lethal Means Safety?

- Lethal means safety (LMS) is an intentional, voluntary practice to reduce suicide risk by limiting access to lethal means.
- Lethal means are objects (e.g., medication, firearms, sharp instruments) that can be used to inflict self-directed violence.
- Individuals who reduce access to lethal means during times of heightened risk reduce their risk of dying by suicide.



Golden Gate Bridge



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Myth – Reducing access to lethal means wont work as the individual will just engage in suicidal self-directed violence via other means-

LMS POPULATION CASE STUDY

In the early 20th century, carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning was a common method of suicide in the U.K. Household ovens used gas derived from coal that produced high CO levels. As a result, many had easy access to a highly lethal method for suicide. By the 1970's, most ovens used natural gas, which has lower CO content, leading to a significant decline in CO-related suicide in the U.K. While some sought other methods of self-directed violence and did unfortunately die by suicide, many did not. The net result saved thousands of lives because a highly lethal suicide method became less readily available.



Another Case Study

LMS POPULATION CASE STUDY

In 2006, in response to high suicide rates among its service members, the Israeli military instituted a policy requiring soldiers to leave their firearms on base during weekend leave.

The suicide rate dropped by 40% on those weekends.

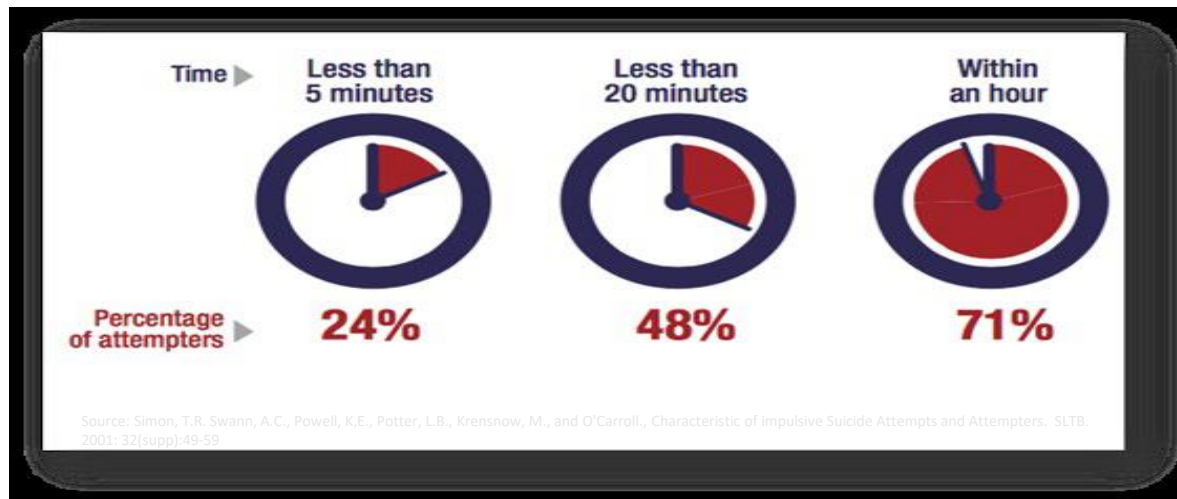
Reference from Rocky Mountain MIRECC



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Why is Lethal Means Safety Important?

Increasing the time and distance between someone with suicidal intent and lethal means can reduce suicide risk.



Most Suicidal Crisis are Brief

Time from Decision to Action: <1 hour.



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Let's talk about reducing access to lethal means during times of heightened risk.

- During a crisis
- Changes in usual pattern of behavior
- Violent or reckless behavior
- A recent major life event, such as job loss, or financial trouble
- Expression of suicidal thoughts, feelings or behaviors
- Expression of feelings of hopelessness, or of being a burden to others.
- Self-isolation
- Increase use of alcohol or drugs
- Children/grandchildren in the home

Stock Image: PowerPoint, Microsoft 365



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Lethal Means Safety for Medications

- Possible Blister packets for home medications
- Medication disposal Kits for unneeded medications
- Reducing quantity from the prescriber
- Naloxone education & distribution



FOR _____ DATE _____	
ADDRESS _____	REFILL _____ TIMES
Rx	
DISPENSE AS WRITTEN _____	PRODUCT SELECTION PERMITTED _____
DEALER _____	ADDRESS _____
<small>Number for 800 848 6888 Star Pharmacy Supply, Inc. 1-800-891-2022</small>	



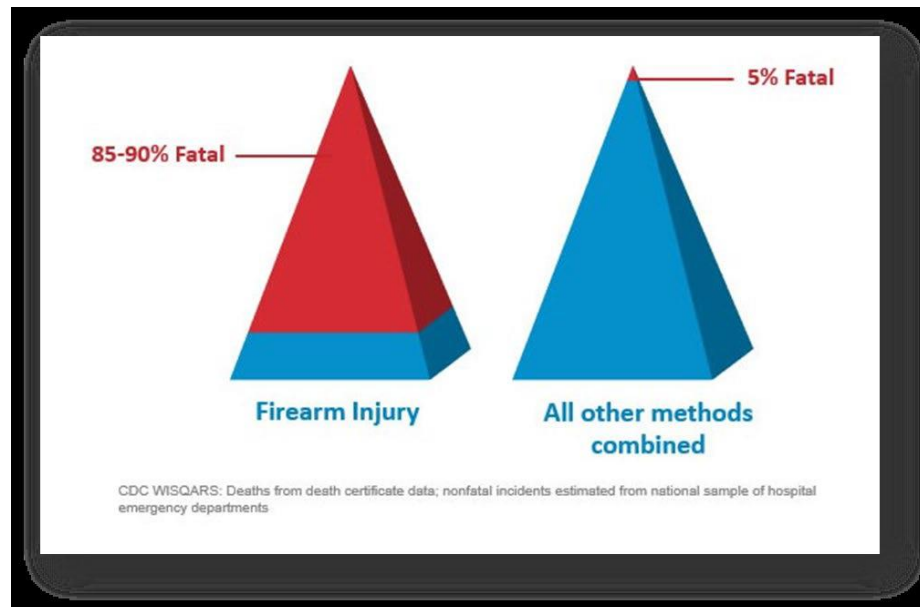
Lethal Means Safety for Medications – cont.

- Home medicine safes
- Medication disposal bins in VHA and in the community
 - The number of medication disposal bins varies within each county.



Why Lethal Means Safety for Firearms is important?

Suicide attempts by firearms are between 85-90% fatal compared with a fatality rate of only 5% for ALL other methods of suicide

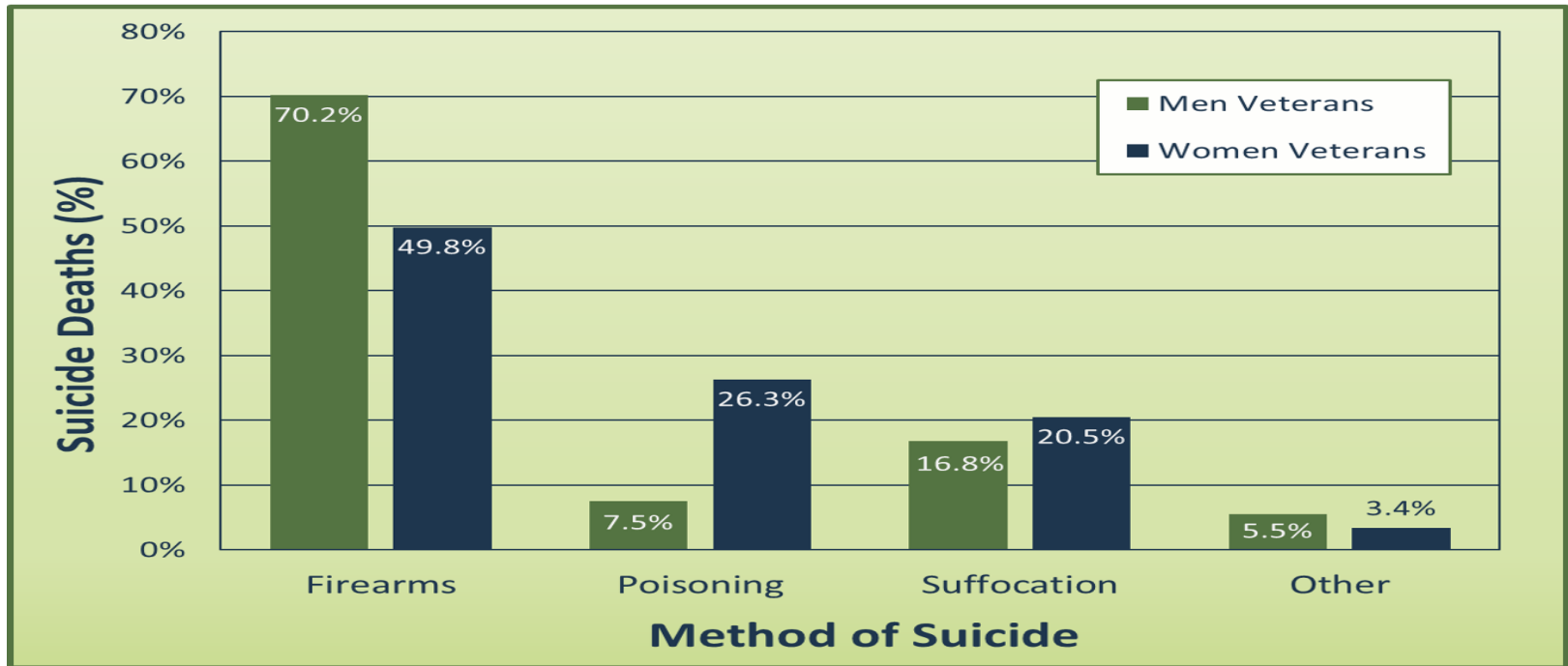


Statistics show that 90% of people who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide.



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Firearms are the most common method of suicide amount Veterans.



(MIRECC lethal means safety page)



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Lethal Means and Veterans

	Suicide Decedents, Methods Involved											
	Non-Veteran U.S. Adults		Veterans		Non-Veteran Men		Veteran Men		Non-Veteran Women		Veteran Women	
	2020	Change*	2020	Change*	2020	Change*	2020	Change*	2020	Change*	2020	Change*
Firearms	50.3%	-2.3%	71.0%	+4.5%	55.3%	-2.7%	72.1%	+4.8%	33.3%	-2.1%	48.2%	+11.2%
Poisoning	12.8%	-5.6%	8.4%	-4.8%	8.0%	-4.3%	7.5%	-4.9%	29.3%	-8.7%	26.8%	-16.0%
Suffocation	28.4%	+7.6%	14.9%	+0.9%	28.6%	+6.2%	14.7%	+0.6%	27.7%	+12.0%	19.2%	+8.8%
Other	8.4%	+0.3%	5.8%	-0.6%	8.1%	+0.8%	5.8%	-0.5%	9.6%	-1.1%	5.8%	-3.9%



Secure Storage for Firearms

- Store Firearm out of the home * in the state of Tennessee it is legal to have someone to temporarily hold your firearm with verbal permission*
- Store Ammunition out of the home
- Store guns and ammunition separately
- Unload and lock the firearm
- Give the lock key to someone else

* Remember time and distance during a crisis event will reduce your risk of death by suicide.



Resources

A Toolkit for Safe Firearm Storage in Your Community –

https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/docs/Toolkit_Safe_Firearm_Storage_CLEARED_508_2-24-20.pdf

National Shooting Sports Foundation: Firearm Safety Information - <https://www.nssf.org/safety/>

VA Center for Medication Safety –

<https://www.pbm.va.gov/pbm/vacenterformedicationsafety/vacenterformedicationsafetyprescriptionsafety.asp>

VA Firearm suicide Prevention & Lethal Means Safety - www.keepitsecure.net

MIRECC/CoE web site on Lethal Means Safety - [Lethal Means Safety & Suicide Prevention - MIRECC / CoE \(va.gov\)](https://www.mirecc.va.gov/lethal-means-safety)

PsychArmor: V.A. SAVE Training & military culture training – <https://learn.psycharmor.org/collections/military-culture>



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Resources Cont.

Suicide Risk Management Consultation Program

This program provides free consultation, support, and resources that promote therapeutic best practices for providers working with Veterans at risk of suicide.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMkcK-Yx2Zs>



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Questions?



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