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Fact Sheet on Washington Gun Laws and Statistics on Gun Violence in Washington

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For Release:
Wednesday, November 3, 1999

Contact:
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Violence Policy Center

This fact sheet provides background information for journalists covering today's shooting at a Seattle, Washington shipyard.

Washington Firearm Laws¹

- A "shall-issue" concealed handgun licensing system is in place under which applicants at least 21 years old with no criminal or mental disqualifiers must be issued a license to carry a concealed handgun "for the purpose of protection or while engaged in business, sport, or while traveling." The license remains valid for five years.
- No permit is required to purchase any firearm.
- Persons between the ages of 18 and 21 may possess handguns "in the person's place of abode, at the person's fixed place of business, or on real property under his or her control."
- The State of Washington preempts municipalities and local entities from implementing gun laws that are stronger than state law.
- A five day waiting period is in effect for handgun purchases. Holders of concealed handgun licenses are exempt from the waiting period.

Firearm-Related Death in Washington

- In 1996 Washington ranked **35th** in rate of firearm-related **death**, with a rate of 10.60 per 100,000. In 1996 the national rate of firearm-related **death** was 12.94 per 100,000.²
- In 1996 Washington ranked **35th** in rate of firearm-related **homicide**, with a rate of 2.89 per 100,000. In 1996 the national rate of firearm-related **homicide** was 6.02 per 100,000.³
- In 1996 Washington ranked **27th** in rate of firearm-related **suicide**, with a rate of 7.41 per 100,000. In 1996 the national rate of firearm-related **suicide** was 6.29 per 100,000.⁴

1) *Revised Code of Washington*, and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, *State Laws and Published Ordinances*, 1998

2) National Center for Health Statistics Compressed Mortality File 1996, accessed through the *CDC Wonder* system from the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention web site at wonder.cdc.gov.

3) National Center for Health Statistics Compressed Mortality File 1996, accessed through the *CDC Wonder* system from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention web site at wonder.cdc.gov.

4) National Center for Health Statistics Compressed Mortality File 1996, accessed through the *CDC Wonder* system from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention web site at wonder.cdc.gov.

The Violence Policy Center is a national non-profit educational foundation that conducts research on violence in America and works to develop violence-reduction policies and proposals. The Center examines the role of firearms in America, conducts research on firearms violence, and explores new ways to decrease firearm-related death and injury.



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Etaine Thompson / AP

Seattle police stand on an armored vehicle as they search for a suspect near the scene of a shooting in the Wallingford neighborhood of Seattle on Wednesday.

2 dead, 2 hurt in Seattle shooting

Police aided by dogs,
helicopters join massive
manhunt for gunman

MSNBC STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

SEATTLE, Nov. 3 — A massive manhunt was under way Wednesday for a gunman who opened fire at a shipyard near a popular park in Seattle, killing two men and wounding two others. Aided by dogs and an armored car, police pursued the gunman, described as a man in his 30s dressed in camouflage clothing and a leather sailor's hat.

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Recent Multiple Shootings

A recent spate of attacks in schools, workplaces, churches and community centers have riveted the nation's attention.

Nov. 2, 1999

Seven workers at a Xerox office building are shot and killed in Honolulu by a gunman who then flees in a company van. Copier repairman Byran Uyesugi is arrested after a five-hour standoff.

Sept. 15, 1999

A gunman enters a church service for teens in Ft. Worth, Texas, and opens fire with a semiautomatic handgun. He kills three adults and three teens, wounding eight more, before he kills himself in a church pew.

1 2 3 4 5

6

Source: The Associated Press, MSNBC
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ONE MAN died at the scene. A second man, who was shot three times in the chest and abdomen, died during surgery at Harborview Medical Center, according to a spokeswoman for the hospital.

Police with their guns drawn were going door to door in a densely packed neighborhood looking for the shooter, described as a 5-foot-10 Caucasian man with light brown hair and scruffy facial hair.

"We've cordoned off the area and have our officers trying to apprehend him," said Seattle police spokeswoman Carmen Best. Several helicopters also aided in the search.

The shooting took place about 10:30 a.m. PT inside a building at the Northlake Shipyard at 1441 N. Northlake. The building houses several ship-related businesses employing more than 25 people, workers said.

- [Live video coverage](#)
- [KING-TV in Seattle](#)

Witnesses said the gunman walked calmly into a back door and then opened fire with a handgun.

Jeannie Parr, who works in a glassed-in office across the hallway from where the shooting occurred, told the Seattle Times that she saw a man in his 30s walk into the shipyard office.

"I saw a fellow coming into the building who I had noticed before," said Parr, who works at nearby Sea Technology. "He just doesn't quite fit with the fishing industry, with the people who work down here. So it was noticeable."

Parr told the Times there was no unusual activity or noise before the shots were fired.

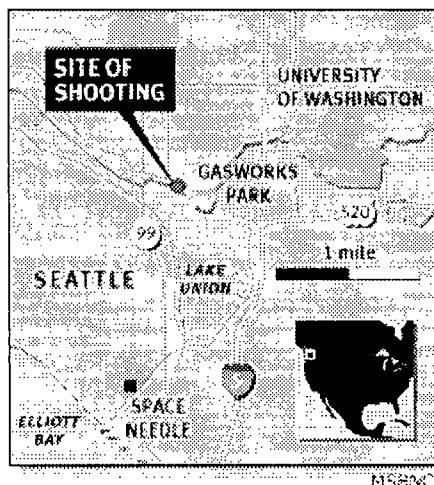
"I just saw him walk into the building and moments later I heard numerous pops," Parr said.

Parr said she looked to see where the shots came from and could see into the office across from her.

"I saw a fellow hanging out the window who had been wounded and he kept saying, 'Call the police, call the police.' " Parr said she called 911 and told dispatchers that others in her building had seen the assailant flee toward Gas Works Park.

Parr said she went to the office where the shots were fired and saw three people who had been hit.

"One of them I was trying to help . . . his eyes were



MSNBC

open, but he was not talking," Parr said. "I kept asking him to squeeze my hand and hold on. His eyes were moving, but it was not like he was really hearing me."

Parr said the man she saw enter the building before the shooting "just calmly walked in and calmly walked out."

Hugs are exchanged Wednesday inside the Northlake Shipyard building in Seattle where the shooting happened.



Of the two wounded men, one with a gunshot wound to the chest is still in critical condition. The second wounded man, 19 years old, was in stable condition with a gunshot wound in the right arm.

Two workers quoted police as saying that one of the dead men was the shipyard manager and a nephew of one of its owners.

"I knew the kid who got killed," said one contractor

who works at the shipyard. "It blew me away when I heard about it."

Barbara Gravelle, a receptionist at a business near the Northlake Shipyard office, said she knows three of the people who were shot.

"They're all kids. They don't deserve this," she said. "It's not right. They're good kids — good-natured and happy."

Several schools in the area north of downtown Seattle were locked down while the hunt for the suspect continued.

Scottie Pierce of Seattle Boat, across the street from where the shootings happened, said he was sending his employees home early.

"It's almost a surreal type situation, faced with what the nation went through in Hawaii yesterday," he told Northwest Cable News.

The shooting, a day after a gunman killed seven workers at a Xerox facility in Honolulu, was the latest in a series of shootings in U.S. workplaces,

Click here to look at gun laws state-by-state.

schools and churches this year.

At a press conference in Washington on Tuesday, President Bill Clinton said his heart went out to the victims and their families. When asked by a reporter if this shooting was a fundamental facet of life in this nation, Clinton remarked that 13 children are shot every day in this country and that there have been periodic outbursts of shootings over the past 20 years where more than one person was killed.

"I don't think we understand fully just how much more violent the United States is than other countries," he said.

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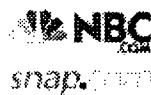
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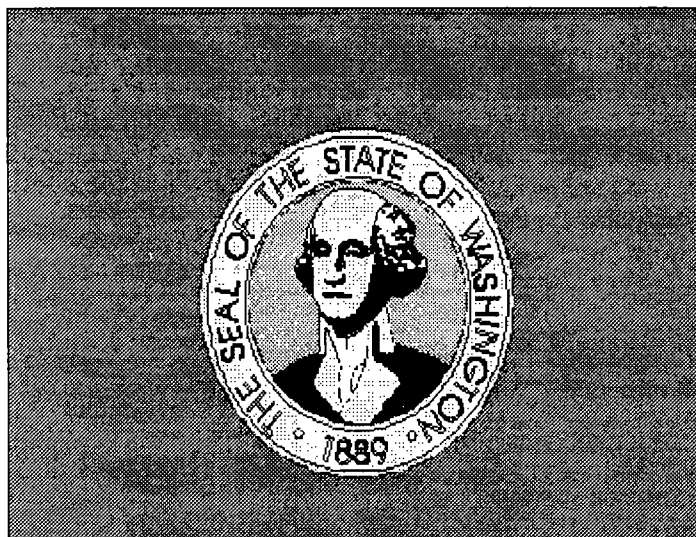
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Washington Firearms Laws

PLEASE NOTE: In addition to state laws, the purchase, sale and (in certain circumstances) the possession and interstate transportation of firearms is regulated by the Gun Control Act of 1968 as amended by the Firearms Owners Protection Act. Also, cities and localities may have their own firearms ordinances in addition to federal and state laws. Details may be obtained by contacting local law enforcement authorities, and by consulting the State Laws and Published Ordinances of Firearms, available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.



Washington

(As of November, 1998)

QUICK REFERENCE CHART	<i>Rifles and Shotguns</i>	<i>Handguns</i>
Permit to Purchase	No	No*
Registration of Firearms	No	No*
Licensing of Owners	No	No*
Permit to Carry	No	Yes*

*Police recordation is made of purchases from dealers.

STATE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION

"The right of the individual citizen to bear arms in defense of himself, or the state, shall not be impaired, but nothing in this section shall be construed as authorizing individuals or corporations to organize, maintain or employ an armed body of men." Article 1, Section 24.

POSSESSION

There are no state licensing requirements for the possession of rifles, shotguns or handguns.

It is unlawful to own, possess or have in control any firearm by a person convicted, or as a juvenile adjudicated, of a felony, serious offense, domestic violence offense if committed after July 1, 1993, who is free on bond or personal recognizance pending trial, appeal or sentence for a serious offense, acquitted of a crime by reason of insanity, or who has ever been committed by a court due to mental illness.

PURCHASE

There are no state licensing requirements for the purchase of rifles or shotguns.

A commercial firearms dealer may not deliver a pistol to a purchaser who is prevented from possessing a pistol (see POSSESSION section), or who is under 21 or to one who he has reasonable cause to believe is a drug addict, habitual drunkard, or of unsound mind.

The purchaser must sign in triplicate and deliver to the dealer an application containing his or her full name, street address, date and place of birth, race, and gender, date and hour of application, driver's or state identification number; and a description of the pistol including the make, model, caliber and manufacturer's number; and a statement that the purchaser is eligible to possess a pistol.

The dealer shall deliver the pistol to the purchaser following the elapse of 5 business days from the receipt of the application for purchase. This period shall be 60 days if the purchaser lacks a Washington driver's license or state identification card or has not been a resident of the state for the previous consecutive 90 days. There is no waiting period where the applicant has a valid license to carry a pistol concealed. The dealer shall not deliver the pistol if he is notified in writing by the police chief or sheriff denying the purchaser's application to purchase and the reasons for the denial.

The police chief or sheriff may obtain a 30 days extension of the waiting period if reasonable grounds exist based on the presence of open or pending criminal charges, outstanding felony warrant, record of arrest lacking a deposition of the charges which may cast doubt on the applicant's right to possess a pistol, or pending mental commitment proceedings. A court may extend this 30 days extension further for good cause shown.

The application "shall not be denied" unless the applicant is ineligible to possess a pistol (See POSSESSION section).

No person shall deliver a pistol to any person under 18 or to one who he has reasonable cause to believe has been convicted of a felony, or who is a drug addict, an habitual drunkard, or of unsound mind.

The state of Washington preempts all cities, towns and other political subdivisions from requiring a purchaser to have a permit to purchase or from requiring a dealer to secure a permit from each sale.

CARRY

A person shall not carry a pistol concealed on his person without a license to carry a concealed weapon. A person may carry concealed without a license in his place of abode or fixed place of business.

A person at least 18 years old who is in possession of an unloaded pistol shall not leave it in a vehicle unless the unloaded pistol is locked within the vehicle and concealed from view from outside the vehicle.

A person shall not carry or place a loaded pistol in any vehicle unless he has a license to carry a concealed weapon and (1) the pistol is on his person, or (2) the person with the concealed carrying license is within the vehicle at all times that the pistol is there, or (3) the person with the concealed carrying license is away from the vehicle and the pistol is locked within the vehicle and concealed from view from outside the vehicle.

The prohibition against carrying concealed without a license does not apply to (1) law enforcement personnel and prison or jail wardens or their deputies; (2) military personnel when on duty; (3) regularly enrolled members of any organization authorized to purchase or receive pistols from the U.S. and regularly enrolled members of target shooting or collectors' clubs and any person engaging in a lawful outdoor recreational activity, provided such persons are at or going to or from such activities; (4) gun dealers in the usual or ordinary course of their business; (5) carrying unloaded and in a closed opaque case or secure wrapper; (6) qualified retired law enforcement officers; (7) armed, licensed private security guards or detectives when on duty or enroute to or from employment.

Application for a license to carry a pistol concealed on the person for protection, business, sport or travel may be made to a police chief, or sheriff, or anywhere in the state for a non-resident. This official shall issue the license within 30 days of application. The license shall be issued within 60 days if the applicant lacks a Washington identification card or driver's license or has not been a resident of Washington for the previous consecutive 90 days. The issuing authority shall not refuse to accept completed applications for concealed pistol licenses during regular business hours. The right to have the license "shall not be denied" unless the applicant:

1. is ineligible to own a pistol (See POSSESSION section).
2. is under 21 years of age.
3. is free on bond or personal recognizance pending trial, appeal, or sentencing for a felony.
4. has an outstanding arrest warrant for a felony or misdemeanor.
5. is subject to a restraining order or domestic violence action requiring the surrender of a deadly weapon.

The applicant must submit to fingerprinting. The license is valid for five years. The fee for an original license is \$36.00, plus additional FBI charges. The renewal fee is \$32.00. "No other additional charges by any branch or unit of government shall be borne by the applicant for the issuance of the license." A political subdivision shall not modify these requirements.

It is unlawful for a person to carry onto, or to possess, on public or private elementary or secondary school premises, school-provided transportation, or areas of facilities while being used exclusively by public or private schools any firearm or any air gun, including any air pistol or air rifle, designed to propel a BB, pellet, or other projectile by the discharge of compressed air, carbon dioxide or other gas.

It is unlawful to "carry, transport, convey, possess or control in or on a motor vehicle a shotgun or rifle containing shells or cartridges in the magazine or chamber, or a muzzle-loading firearm loaded and capped or primed."

It is unlawful for an alien to carry or have in his possession at any time any rifle, shotgun or handgun without an alien license issued by the director of licensing. The director may issue a license upon the certificate of the consul within the state who represents the alien's country, stating that said alien is a responsible person and upon the payment of a \$55.00 fee, plus additional charges imposed by the FBI. An alien license is valid for 5 years. This does not apply to Canadian citizens who reside in a province that has reciprocal arrangements with the state of Washington. These persons may carry or possess weapons while hunting, competing in bona fide trap or skeet shoot or any other organized shooting contest. The only exemptions from this provision are law enforcement officers and disabled hunters who possess a disabled hunter permit in a non-moving vehicle that is turned off.

ANTIQUES AND REPLICAS

The above regulations do not apply to antique firearms which is a firearm or a replica of a firearm not designed or redesigned for using rim fire or conventional center fire ignition with fixed ammunition and manufactured in or before 1898, including any matchlock, flintlock, percussion cap, or similar type of ignition system and also any firearm using fixed ammunition manufactured in or before 1898, for which ammunition is no longer manufactured in the U. S. and is not readily available in the ordinary channels of commercial trade.

MACHINE GUNS

It is unlawful to "manufacture, own, buy, sell, loan, furnish, transport, or have in possession or under control, any machine gun, or any part thereof capable of use or assembling or repairing any machine gun."

Exempt are peace officers and members of the military when on duty, and persons complying with federal law who possess a U.S. industrial security clearance and who produce, manufacture, or test machine guns.

A machine gun is defined as any "weapon mechanism or instrument not requiring that the trigger be pressed for each shot and having a reservoir clip, disc, drum, belt or other separable mechanical device for storing, carrying, or supplying ammunition which can be loaded into such weapon, mechanism or instrument and fired therefrom at the rate of five or more shots per second."

MISCELLANEOUS

It is unlawful to "change, alter, remove, or obliterate the name of the maker, model, manufacturer's number, or other mark of identification" on any firearm. Possession of a firearm with its marks altered creates a legal presumption that the possessor committed the offense.

It is unlawful to set a spring gun. But, this does not preclude the setting of "coyote getters" which are authorized by the state department of agriculture or the state department of game.

It is unlawful for a person under 18 to possess a firearm except in attendance at a hunter's safety course or a firearms safety course, target shooting, hunting or trapping with a valid license, in an area where the discharge of a firearm is permitted, traveling with an unloaded firearm to any such lawful activity, on real property under the control of the minor's parent, relative, or legal guardian, or at the minor's residence and who has permission to possess a firearm. Unless one of the above exceptions applies, a person under 21, but at least 18, may possess a pistol only in his place of abode, fixed place of business, or on real property under his control.

It is unlawful to "carry, exhibit, display or draw any firearm" in such a way as to manifest an intent to intimidate another.

This does not apply to persons in their own home or place of business or to instances of self-defense or acting in furtherance of one's official duties.

It is unlawful to shoot any handgun, rifle or shotgun across or along any public highway.

It is unlawful to carry firearms upon a game preserve, or to hunt while intoxicated.

It is unlawful to possess any firearm while on the site of an outdoor musical festival.

During a state of emergency, the governor may forbid the possession of firearms outside the home or place of business.

Local laws and ordinances that are inconsistent with, more restrictive than, or exceed the requirements of state gun laws shall not be enacted.

Sources: Wash. Rev. Code Sections 9.41.010 et seq., 43.06.220, 70.108.150, 77.16.070, 77.16.110, 77.16.250, 77.16.260.

Posted: 1999-07-16

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