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Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma
Advancing Science, Fostering Relationships, and Building Careers



Statement on Firearm-Related Injuries

The most recent spate of mass shootings has taken the conversation on firearm violence to another level. These high-profile events are front page news, but they represent only a small fraction of the problem of firearm-related injuries and deaths in the United States. This is not a new problem, but it has been escalating over the past several years.

The early 1990s were marked by a high rate of gun-related homicides, but there was a significant decrease beginning in 1994, as drug- and gang-related violence was addressed through various measures. However, since 2014 the annual number of gun-related homicides has nearly doubled, to levels never before seen in the United States- and it affects all of us. Firearms are now the most common cause of death for our nation's youth from the ages of 1 to 19. This astonishing statistic cannot be ignored or accepted. Equally disturbing is the epidemic of firearm-related suicides, which continue to far outnumber firearm-related homicides. This must come to an end.

As trauma surgeons, we have witnessed firsthand the horrific carnage caused by firearms, and the unimaginable toll it takes on the families of the victims. We cannot stand by and watch. We, the undersigned, represent the three primary academic trauma organizations of the United States: the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma (AAST), Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma (EAST), and Western Trauma Association (WTA). We endorse the 13 recommendations proposed by the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma Firearm Strategy Team. In particular, we support the recommendation from the ACS Firearm Strategy team to reclassify high velocity, magazine-fed semiautomatic rifles as Class 3 weapons under the National Firearms Act to provide tighter regulation of these highly lethal weapons. Further, we will continue to research the problem and work with our communities on local solutions to curb this public health threat.

This statement has been approved unanimously by the Executive Councils of our organizations.

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We speak for the AAST, the Maine MA, the
American College of Surgeons and the Am Acad Pediatrics