

2026 EDITION • COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

Gun Safe Storage Laws State by State

What every gun owner needs to verify before January 1, 2026.

A companion resource to the GunCarrier 2026 storage laws guide.

\$10,000

Maximum Illinois civil penalty when a covered person accesses an improperly stored firearm and harm results.

48 HOURS

New Illinois reporting window for lost or stolen firearms, down from 72 hours.

JAN 1, 2026

Effective date of the Illinois Safe Gun Storage Act (Public Act 104-0031).

PRINT THIS. KEEP IT WITH YOUR SAFE DOCUMENTATION.

This checklist is general information, not legal advice. Storage statutes vary by state, are amended regularly, and may be subject to local ordinances stricter than state law. Verify current law in your jurisdiction through your official state legislative portal before relying on any summary. For uncertainty about your specific setup, consult a firearms attorney.

How to Use This Checklist

Three questions answer most of what a gun owner needs to know about their state's storage law. This checklist walks you through them, then gives you the equipment, drill, and documentation steps that turn legal compliance into actual home defense readiness.

1. Does my state require locked storage?

Universal mandate, conditional mandate (children present, prohibited persons), or no mandate at all.

2. What qualifies as 'locked'?

Locked container required, trigger lock acceptable, or undefined.

3. What is the penalty if I get it wrong?

Civil penalty, criminal penalty, or civil liability only.

Read the table this way

Universal means the law applies regardless of who is in the home. **Conditional** means the law triggers when specific people (usually children of a defined age, or prohibited persons) could gain access. **None** means no statewide storage mandate, but civil liability still applies if an unsecured firearm causes harm. Local ordinances may be stricter than state law in any tier.

Color Key

	Tier 1, Universal locked storage: locked storage required in most or all circumstances.
	Tier 2, Conditional locked storage: locked storage required when children or at-risk persons are present.
	Tier 3, No state mandate: no statewide locked storage requirement; civil liability still applies.
	Illinois (highlighted): new mandate effective January 1, 2026.

Quick Reference: All 50 States

Each state's storage mandate, lock-type requirement, penalty type, and 2026 status. Illinois is highlighted as the headline change for 2026.

STATE	STORAGE MANDATE	TRIGGER LOCK SUFFICIENT?	PENALTY TYPE	2026 STATUS
Alabama	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Alaska	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Arizona	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Arkansas	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
California	Conditional	No, locked container or device	Criminal + civil	Active
Colorado	Conditional	Locking device acceptable	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
Connecticut	Universal (minor or at-risk)	Locked container or device	Criminal + civil	Active
Delaware	Conditional	Locking device acceptable	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
Florida	Conditional (under 16)	Locked container or device	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
Georgia	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Hawaii	Universal (minor)	Locked container or device	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
Idaho	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Illinois	Universal (minor, at-risk, prohibited)	No, locked container required	Civil \$500-\$10,000 + negligence per se	NEW: Effective Jan 1, 2026
Indiana	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Iowa	Conditional (under 14)	Locked container	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
Kansas	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Kentucky	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Louisiana	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Maine	Conditional (under 16)	Locked container or device	Civil + criminal	Active
Maryland	Conditional (under 16)	Locked container or device	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
Massachusetts	Universal (all firearms)	Locked container required	Criminal + license loss	Active, strictest
Michigan	Universal (minor)	Locked container or device	Misdemeanor to felony	Active
Minnesota	Universal (minor)	Locked container or device	Gross misdemeanor	Active
Mississippi	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Missouri	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Montana	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Nebraska	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Nevada	Conditional (under 18)	Locked container or device	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
New Hampshire	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change

STATE	STORAGE MANDATE	TRIGGER LOCK SUFFICIENT?	PENALTY TYPE	2026 STATUS
New Jersey	Universal (not in possession)	Locked container required	Criminal disorderly persons	Active
New Mexico	Conditional (under 18)	Locked container	Civil + criminal	Active
New York	Universal (under 16)	Locked container required	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
North Carolina	Conditional (under 18)	Locked container	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
North Dakota	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Ohio	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Oklahoma	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Oregon	Universal (locked at all times)	Locked container required	Civil + criminal	Active
Pennsylvania	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Rhode Island	Conditional (under 18)	Locked container or device	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
South Carolina	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
South Dakota	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Tennessee	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Texas	Conditional (under 17)	Locked container	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
Utah	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Vermont	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Virginia	Conditional (under 14)	Locked container	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
Washington	Universal (community access)	Locked container required	Civil + criminal	Active
West Virginia	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change
Wisconsin	Conditional (under 14)	Locked container	Criminal misdemeanor	Active
Wyoming	None	N/A	Civil liability only	No change

Citation note for editor: verify each state statute against current published code before publish. Cross-reference Giffords Law Center 2026 summary for any updates between draft and publish date.

Tier 1: Universal Locked Storage States

These states require locked storage in most or all circumstances, regardless of household composition. If you live here, locked storage is the baseline.

ILLINOIS **NEW for 2026**

Statute: Safe Gun Storage Act, Public Act 104-0031 (Senate Bill 8)

Effective: January 1, 2026

Scope: Applies when a minor (under 18), at-risk person, or prohibited person is likely to gain access. Covers homes and vehicles.

What qualifies: Locked container that renders the firearm inaccessible or unusable to anyone other than the owner or authorized user.

What does not qualify: Trigger lock alone, hidden but unlocked storage, an unlocked drawer.

Penalty: Civil penalty up to \$500. Up to \$10,000 if a covered person accesses the firearm and harm or crime results. Violation is prima facie evidence of negligence per se in civil court.

Exception: Firearm carried on the owner's person or under direct control is treated as lawfully stored.

Reporting: Lost or stolen firearms must be reported within 48 hours (down from 72).

MASSACHUSETTS

Statute: M.G.L. c. 140, § 131L

Scope: All firearms not under the owner's direct control must be stored secured.

What qualifies: Locked container or equipped with a tamper-resistant mechanical lock or other safety device.

Penalty: Criminal charges (misdemeanor to felony depending on age of accessing minor and outcome). License revocation possible.

Notes: Considered the strictest state-level storage statute in the country. Applies whether children are present or not.

OREGON

Statute: ORS 166.395

Scope: Universal locked storage required when firearm is not in the owner's direct possession.

What qualifies: Locked container or trigger or cable lock.

Penalty: Class C violation for failure to secure. Class A misdemeanor if a minor obtains the firearm. Civil liability for damages.

WASHINGTON

Statute: RCW 9.41.360 (Community Access Prevention)

Scope: Universal locked storage when a prohibited person, including minors, could access the firearm.

What qualifies: Locked container or equipped with a locking device.

Penalty: Gross misdemeanor to Class C felony depending on outcome. Civil liability.

NEW JERSEY

Statute: N.J.S.A. 2C:58-15 and 2C:58-16

Scope: Firearms not in possession must be stored locked. Specific requirements for homes with minors.

What qualifies: Locked container, gun safe, or securely locked location.

Penalty: Disorderly persons offense, with elevated penalties when a minor gains access.

Tier 2: Conditional Locked Storage States

These states require locked storage when specific people (usually minors of a defined age) live in or have access to the home. The mandate is real, but its trigger depends on household composition.

CALIFORNIA

Statute: Cal. Penal Code §§ 25100, 25200, 25210 (Child Access Prevention and Locked Storage)

Scope: Storage required when a child or prohibited person is likely to gain access. Locked storage required for residences shared with prohibited persons regardless of children.

What qualifies: Locked container or locking device that renders the firearm inoperable.

Penalty: Misdemeanor to felony depending on age of child and outcome. Civil liability extensive.

CONNECTICUT

Statute: Conn. Gen. Stat. § 29-37i

Scope: Required when minor under 18 or person at risk is likely to gain access.

What qualifies: Locked container or device.

Penalty: Class D felony if minor accesses and causes harm. Class C misdemeanor for general violation.

COLORADO

Statute: C.R.S. § 18-12-114 (Safe Storage of Firearms)

Scope: Required when juvenile or prohibited person could access. Vehicles included.

What qualifies: Locked gun safe, locked container, or locking device.

Penalty: Class 2 misdemeanor.

NEW YORK

Statute: N.Y. Penal Law § 265.45

Scope: Required when person under 16 may access.

What qualifies: Locked container or appropriate safe-storage depository, with safety locking device.

Penalty: Class A misdemeanor.

MARYLAND

Statute: Md. Code, Crim. Law § 4-104

Scope: Required when an unsupervised child under 16 may gain access.

What qualifies: Locked container or equipped with a trigger lock.

Penalty: Misdemeanor, up to \$1,000 fine.

DELAWARE

Statute: 11 Del. C. § 1456

Scope: Required when a child under 18 may gain access.

What qualifies: Locked box, container, or locking device.

Penalty: Class A misdemeanor.

OTHER CONDITIONAL STATES

Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin all maintain conditional locked storage statutes triggered by the presence of minors of varying defined ages (typically under 14, 16, 17, or 18). Verify the specific age threshold and lock-type requirement in your state before relying on this summary.

Tier 3: No State Storage Mandate

These states impose no statewide storage requirement. Civil liability still applies under general negligence principles if an unsecured firearm causes harm. Local ordinances in some cities (Atlanta, Seattle, Pittsburgh, Albuquerque, and others) may be stricter than state law.

States with no statewide locked storage mandate as of 2026: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, Wyoming.

Important: 'No mandate' is not 'no liability'

If an unsecured firearm in your home is accessed by a child, an unauthorized adult, or a prohibited person and harm follows, you are exposed to civil suit and possibly criminal charges under general endangerment or reckless conduct statutes. The absence of a specific storage law is not a license to leave guns unsecured.

Compliance Action Checklist

Run this checklist whether your state requires locked storage or not. The bar that matters is responsible ownership, not bare legal minimum.

Step 1: Know your law

- Locate your state's specific storage statute citation.
- Read the actual text, not a summary, for the locked container definition.
- Check your city or county for ordinances stricter than state law.
- Note the specific age threshold, if any, that triggers the mandate.

Step 2: Audit your current setup

- Identify every firearm in the home and where it is stored when unattended.
- Confirm each storage location qualifies as 'locked container' under your state's definition.
- Confirm any firearm stored in a vehicle meets your state's vehicle storage requirements.
- Identify any household members or visitors who fall under the mandate's protected class.

Step 3: Buy the right equipment

- Quick-access biometric or keypad safe for home defense firearm (under 2-second access, 12-month battery, anchored mounting, keypad and key backup).
- Full-size safe or locked container for firearms not in active home defense rotation.
- Locked hard case or vehicle-rated lockbox for in-vehicle storage.
- Test each unit in your hand, in the dark, before committing.

Step 4: Drill the access

- Run weekly access drills from your bedside position.
- Time the sequence with a stopwatch. Target: under 5 seconds from sleeping to firearm in hand.
- Once per quarter, set a 3 a.m. alarm and run the drill cold.
- Track first-attempt unlock success rate. Target: above 95% across 30 cold trials.

Step 5: Document everything

- Photograph each safe in its anchored position.
- Save receipts and product documentation.
- Write your state's statute citation on a card stored with the documentation.
- Update the photos any time the setup changes.
- Save a digital copy in cloud storage.

Step 6: Schedule the review

- Set a calendar reminder for January 1 each year to verify your state's statute has not changed.
- Review your storage setup any time household composition changes (new child, new roommate, new visitor pattern).
- Replace safe batteries on a fixed schedule, not when they fail.

What to Watch For

Storage law is one of the fastest-moving areas of state firearms regulation. Watch for these signals that your state may be next.

- **A child access prevention bill introduced in your state legislature.** These bills are often the gateway to broader locked storage mandates. Track them through your state's legislative portal.
- **A high-profile unintentional shooting involving an unsecured firearm.** State legislators often respond to specific incidents with storage legislation in the next session.
- **A neighboring state passing a storage mandate.** Storage law tends to spread regionally. If a state next door passes one, watch your own legislature's filing window.
- **An attorney general's office issuing new guidance.** Even without new legislation, an AG can interpret existing endangerment statutes more broadly to cover storage failures.

The trajectory across 2026 and beyond is more storage regulation, not less. Stay current.

When to Talk to a Lawyer

This checklist is general information. Talk to a firearms-licensed attorney in your state if any of the following apply.

- You are uncertain whether your specific storage setup qualifies under your state's statute.
- You have been involved in any incident where an unsecured firearm was accessed.
- You are moving between states with materially different storage regimes.
- You are establishing a multi-firearm household, a business with employee access, or a residence with a person under a domestic violence protective order, restraining order, or other prohibited-person status.
- You have been notified of a civil claim involving any firearm in your possession.

The math on legal consultation

A 30-minute consultation with a competent firearms attorney costs less than the civil penalty in most states and far less than the legal exposure of getting storage wrong.

Sources and Further Reading

- **Illinois General Assembly:** Public Act 104-0031, Safe Gun Storage Act (ilga.gov).
- **Giffords Law Center:** State-by-state child access prevention and storage law summaries.
- **Everytown for Gun Safety:** State storage law tracker.
- **Your state's official legislative portal:** search '[your state] revised statutes firearm storage.'
- **Companion article:** 'Gun Safe Storage Laws 2026: What Owners Must Know Now' on GunCarrier.com.

The Bottom Line

Compliance is the floor. Readiness is the standard. The same equipment that satisfies the law also gives you faster, more reliable home defense access than an unsecured drawer ever did. Verify your state's statute. Buy a safe you have tested. Drill the access. Document what you have done. Keep this checklist with your safe documentation and review it on January 1 each year.

Last Updated: [Publication Date Placeholder] | **Next Scheduled Review:** January 2027

Disclaimer: This checklist is general information about firearm storage laws and is not legal advice. Storage statutes vary by state, are amended regularly, and may be subject to local ordinances stricter than state law. Verify current law in your jurisdiction through your official state legislative portal before relying on any summary. For uncertainty about your specific setup, consult a firearms attorney licensed in your state.

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