

PERSONAL-PROTECTION PLAN

CONCEALED CARRY

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THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE FOR PROTECTING YOURSELF AND YOUR AMERICANS



YOU ARE ALSO HERE

- S PISTOL TRAINING
- M SECURITY CO. ON-SITE REVIEW
- T FIRST AID KIT & FIRE EXTINGUISHERS
- W NEW DEAD BOLT INSTALL
- T REVIEW PLAN w/ KIDS
- F SELF-DEF. CLASS



RIDE ALONG

CARRYING AND TRANSPORTING FIREARMS
IN YOUR VEHICLE | TIM COOPER



F or those who simply wish to transport guns to the range for target practice, locking them up unloaded in the trunk or bed of a truck should work just fine, and there's probably no need to read further. However, if you're reading this publication, chances are you own and carry firearms for self-defense and want to ensure you remain protected while you drive. If so, this article is for you.

State laws regarding loaded firearms in vehicles vary widely, but most states that permit individuals to carry concealed extend that permission to carrying in motor vehicles in some fashion as well. Not surprisingly, the devil is in the details. For example, many states allow licensed individuals to possess loaded handguns inside a vehicle while specifically prohibiting loaded shotguns and rifles. Additionally, some states, such as California, permit residents with carry permits to have loaded firearms in their vehicles but offer no reciprocity with other states. This means it could be illegal for non-residents to carry anywhere, including within a vehicle. Therefore, heed these words of caution: When you're transporting a firearm in your vehicle, you must familiarize yourself with the gun laws in every state to or through which you'll be traveling.

UNDERSTANDING THE FOIPA

The Firearms Owners' Protection Act (FOIPA) — codified into law in 1986 as 18 USC Section 926A — is a federal law that was introduced to prevent the Gun Control Act of 1968 from imposing unnecessary restrictions on law-abiding citizens. This law allows U.S. citizens to transport firearms across state lines, provided the following conditions are met:

- You can lawfully possess firearms in your state of origin.
- You can lawfully possess firearms at your destination.
- Any firearms are unloaded, with ammunition stored separately and out of reach — either inaccessible from the passenger compartment or secured in a locked container. (State laws and concealed carry reciprocity agreements may impact this particular requirement.)

Harkening back to those “devilish details” mentioned earlier, some states ban certain guns and certain magazines and accessories. You need to keep in mind that 18 USC Section 926A protects you as you travel through such states, but not beyond just passing through. Therefore, when you're traveling through states with strict gun laws, you may wish to avoid stopping altogether.

STORAGE REQUIREMENTS

As we've learned from the coffee mugs and pop bottles rolling around on the back-seat floor, items that aren't secured tend to move. It stands to reason that placing a loaded handgun on the seat or dashboard is a bad idea.

USE YOUR HEAD(REST)

A glove box isn't a safe, and a car isn't a holster. In order to secure your firearms when they are not under your direct control, you must take a few additional steps.



BULLDOG

CAR/PERSONAL SAFE

■ This lockbox is really handy if you need a secure spot for your firearm while you're driving. It's made of tough steel, has a solid lock and is easy to install in your vehicle. The soft, scratch-resistant interior ensures your firearm remains unscathed during storage. | MSRP: \$38.99+



Whether you're driving with a firearm across town or across the country, you'll have to engage in some deliberate forethought to do so safely and responsibly. Here are some important considerations:

Exactly where do you plan to secure the firearm while you're on the road?

How will you secure the gun upon arriving at your destination? Will it remain with you at all times, require some sort of safe storage at an interim location or stay in an unattended vehicle?

Even some traditionally gun-friendly states have recently enacted safe-storage laws that impose stiff penalties on gun owners who fail to securely store firearms when they're not in use. These laws apply to guns stored in homes and vehicles. While some of these laws are untested and are facing challenges in the courts, few of us long to be legal guinea pigs. Vehicle thefts and break-ins are on the rise; betting you won't be a victim of such a crime could be a costly, life-changing mistake.

As you consider these factors, let's explore some products that can help meet your needs. Similar to decisions about retention holsters and thumb safeties, there is a fine line between keeping a firearm safe, concealed and secure while also making it readily accessible from the driver's seat. Unfortunately, all vehicle gun-storage solutions involve trade-offs. For instance, one option might allow you to stage your pistol for quick access in a self-defense scenario but leave it exposed and unsecured (and an attractive target for theft). Conversely, another product might keep the gun locked and hidden from prying eyes but hinder your ability to quickly deploy it. Due to these trade-offs, it's possible that you may end up needing more than one solution.

There is, of course, an obvious location for making your firearm accessible for

rapid deployment that has nothing to do with the vehicle you're driving: carrying it in a holster on your body. However, there are too many variables to make this a truly safe and effective solution for everyone. Factors such as comfort, firearm type, holster type, carry location, body type and physical limitations all play a role. For the sake of this discussion, I'll simply acknowledge the possibility and leave it there.

Many concealed carriers prefer off-body carry while they're driving, so I'll be focusing on off-body solutions.

HOLSTERS AND DASH MOUNTS

These products allow you to quickly set up a pistol-staging area anywhere in your vehicle where space permits. There are plenty of options available, but before you shop, evaluate the mounting surfaces that are safely within arm's reach of the driver's seat.

The Vulcan QuickDraw (\$29.99) is a simple and effective option that should work for most applications. It's well-made and garners positive reviews, and the price fits just about anyone's budget. You can mount it using the included fasteners or with optional double-sided adhesive tape.

If you're seeking an effortless installation, consider the Vets Tactical Cupolster (\$59.95 to \$74.95). This innovative product fits into most standard-sized vehicle cup holders. The Alpha One series positions the pistol

at a 90-degree angle with zero cant, while the Bravo One series incorporates a 20-degree cant. For vehicles with smaller cup holders, Vets Tactical offers the Charlie Alpha option (\$15.99), which adapts any Cupolster to fit a small-diameter cup holder.

Just as with selecting the holster you wear, always ensure the vehicle mount is designed to support the size and weight of your handgun.

You need to understand that the primary purpose of these products is to provide quick access to a mounted firearm. This often means such a product may be visible to nosy passersby in a parking lot. Furthermore, most of these solutions inherently lack security features to prevent unauthorized access. For these reasons, when you arrive at your destination, you'll need to either take the firearm with you or have an additional secure-storage solution in your vehicle. And if you're in a collision, keep in mind that your firearm will be unsecured.

HANDGUN SAFES AND LOCKBOXES

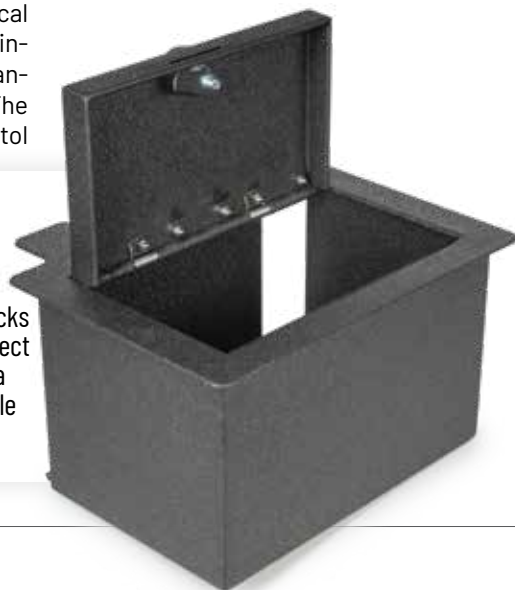
Many pistol safes and lockboxes available for home and office use are also well-suited for securing firearms in vehicles. Some models may require more permanent installation than others.

Bulldog Cases Car/Personal Safe (\$38.99) and Personal Car Vault (\$48.99) are inexpensive, well-constructed and incredibly versatile. Each features a two-piece design that allows it to be locked and docked into a permanently installed mounting bracket (included). Upon reaching your destination, you can unlock the safe from its mount and take it with you. A security cable (also included) pro-

CONSOLE VAULT

VEHICLE SAFE

■ This safe fits into your vehicle's console, blends in seamlessly and locks up tight. It's tough, discreet and perfect for storing items such as a firearm, a wallet and important documents while you're out and about. | MSRP: \$299+



vides a tethering option when the safe is undocked. In addition, Bulldog offers a second mounting bracket (\$18.99) for swapping the two different-sized safes between vehicles or a vehicle and another location. However, both models are available only with a key-lock configuration, which can make quick access to a firearm more challenging.

If you're looking for keyless entry and a few more bells and whistles, consider the Vaultek Slider series. This safe is available in four configurations: Essential (\$219.99), Non-Biometric Bluetooth (\$269.99), Biometric Bluetooth (\$319.99) and Wi-Fi (\$359.99). Each model includes a five-button, backlit electronic keypad. A proximity sensor illuminates the keys when your hand is near.

All Slider safes come with a VESA-style mounting bracket, which can be permanently attached to the passenger- or driver's-side seat rail using the included adapter hardware. The interior features a high-quality foam holster, providing enough space for a full-sized pistol and a spare magazine. When the safe is unlocked, the door slides out horizontally in a fraction of a second for rapid access.

The Essential model can be opened only by using the electronic keypad or the included backup key. Higher-tier models add Bluetooth functionality (via a smartphone app or push-button Nano Key) and, depending upon the configuration, a biometric fingerprint scanner.

The top-tier Wi-Fi model incorporates Vaultek Intelligent Safe Network (ViSN) technology. Managed through an app available on Android and iOS devices, ViSN creates an ecosystem for Vaultek's Wi-Fi-enabled safes. This platform connects compatible products to the cloud, allowing you to monitor safe status from anywhere and receive push, SMS and email notifications related to safe entry and tampering.

ViSN also securely stores biometric data (fingerprints), enabling you to quickly share that information with another ViSN-equipped safe you own, bypassing the standard programming process. If you desire, you can disable ViSN, configuring the safe for stand-alone management in "essential mode."

CUSTOM SOLUTIONS

Thus far, I've highlighted products designed to fit most vehicles, regardless of make and model. However, for some, the ideal combination of stealth, security and aesthetics can be achieved only through a custom solution.

If your car or truck interior is equipped with a center or under-bench console, take a look at Console Vault. The base models come with a barrel-key lock, but additional lock options are available for an extra charge, including three- and four-digit combination locks as well as electronic varieties.

Console Vault cannot possibly support every automobile on the road since not every vehicle provides an interior capable of accommodating a console safe. That said, the company's offerings are expansive, including solutions for most late-model trucks, SUVs and mini-SUVs. Console safes are even available for certain sedans and Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Ford owners will be interested to know that Console Vault has been designated as a Ford Worldwide Licensing Partner. To determine if your specific make and model is supported, visit Console Vault's website and use its vehicle-search feature.

The Headrest Safe Co. offers an innovative storage solution that allows you to conceal a safe within the headrest assembly, replacing the original assembly in your vehicle. All models are sold as pairs. The passenger-side model contains the safe, while the driver's-side model serves as a cosmetic match to maintain the vehicle's interior aesthetics and avoid drawing unnecessary attention.

The company's latest



VAULTEK

SLIDER SAFE

■ Safes in the Slider line are slim, durable and designed to open smoothly for fast retrieval of a sidearm. An optional biometric lock makes it easy to keep your gun secure but accessible when you need it. | **MSRP: \$219.99+**

offering is the Slide Bundle (\$319). This model features a removable safe that doubles as a portable lockbox, complete with a shoulder strap for secure transport and storage outside the vehicle. It's also TSA-compliant, allowing you to pack it in your checked luggage before you enter the secure area of an airport.

While the headrest safe may not stage your firearm for lightning-fast access in a self-defense emergency, it's an excellent choice for secure storage.

HIT THE ROAD WITH PEACE OF MIND

There isn't enough space here to cover all of the available options for safely and securely transporting a firearm in your vehicle. Hopefully, it's clear by now that carrying while you're driving is a decision that you shouldn't take lightly. There are some unique challenges associated with a gun in a car or truck, but with a little forethought and the right solution tailored to your vehicle, you can hit the road with peace of mind.



SOURCES

Bulldog Cases: BulldogCases.com

Console Vault: ConsoleVault.com

The Headrest Safe Co.:

TheHeadrestSafe.com

Vaultek: VaultekSafe.com

Vets Tactical: VetsTactical.com

Vulcan Arms: VulcanArms.com

VETS TACTICAL

CUPOLSTER

■ This unit, which sits in a vehicle's cup holder, can be a good spot to ground your gun for a moment — provided you remain in the vehicle with it. | **MSRP: \$59.95+**

