

APPENDIX A: EXTREME RISK LAW STORIES

The following stories provide a few illustrations of Extreme Risk laws—sometimes referred to as “red flag” laws or gun violence restraining orders (GVROs)—being used to temporarily remove firearms from dangerous situations. When a person is in crisis and considering harming themselves or others, family members and law enforcement are often the first people to see the warning signs. These laws are designed to provide a tool to defuse dangerous situations while also providing due process and a system of checks and balances.

Everytown compiled these stories from media reports and publicly available databases. The stories are presented by intent and by timing, including both month and year, when known. While they do not cover every case where an order was issued under an Extreme Risk law, these stories provide important examples of the vital role of Extreme Risk laws in preventing people in crisis from accessing firearms.

Learn more about Extreme Risk laws at <https://everytownresearch.org/extreme-risk-laws-save-lives/>

DANGER OF HARMING OTHERS

JULY 2016 • CAMPBELL, CA

A woman contacted the Campbell Police Department after her husband sent her a threatening text referencing a recent sniper attack in Dallas, Texas, then loaded his guns into his car and departed. After an order was issued, police removed seven weapons, including a scoped rifle, from the man's place of work.¹

MAY 2018 • BROWARD COUNTY, FL

Courthouse employees notified law enforcement after a Broward County bailiff simulated shooting people from the fifth-floor atrium, calling them “easy prey.” Following a hearing, a judge ordered 67 firearms, including an AR-15, to be removed from the bailiff's home for a year.²

2018 • PENDLETON, OR

After a man was fired from his job, his sister reported to police that he was planning to return to his workplace to shoot his boss. His sister then confronted him outside of his home, and he threatened to kill her if she did not let him leave. The confrontation resulted in the man hiding his gun in a storage shed. Police arrested the man and police were granted an order to have the firearm removed.³

2018 • MIAMI-DADE, FL

A man frequently used a gun to threaten his mother and had said that “the boy did a good job,” referring to the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. He had a conviction for using a firearm under the influence and had previously been taken to a mental health facility. Miami-Dade Police obtained an order for the 29-year-old man and when they arrived at his house, he began shooting a gun inside and outside. Police then removed two assault rifles, two handguns, and ammunition.⁴

2018 • SAN DIEGO, CA

A 79-year-old man allegedly shot a city worker and was placed in custody. Police were concerned about the man having access to firearms if he were to be released on bail,

and they requested and received an order. Police removed an AR-15 with a 200-round drum magazine, 34 other rifles, and 21 handguns from his home.⁵

2018 • MONROE, WA

A man posted a stream of hateful comments online about killing Jews in a synagogue and kids in a school. In one post, he reportedly wrote that he was "shooting for 30 Jews," and in another post he wrote about replicating the actions of the white supremacist who killed nine people at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. The Snohomish County Sheriff's Office was granted an order, and 12 guns were removed.⁶

2018 • SAN DIEGO, CA

Employees at a car sales lot became concerned after their coworker allegedly praised the perpetrator of the Route 91 Harvest festival shooting in Las Vegas and said he thought about committing a similar act at a church or synagogue. The man also told his coworkers he would kill them all if he were ever fired. Police were granted an order and they removed the man's two handguns, two shotguns, and an AR-15.⁷

c. 2016-2018 • CALIFORNIA

A 24-year-old man threatened to shoot or bomb the employees of his family's business, his family, and himself the following day. He reportedly had made these types of threats previously. The man's uncle reported this incident to the police and his mother petitioned for an order three days later. A temporary ex parte order was granted, and 26 firearms, including two assault-style rifles and 18 semiautomatic pistols, were relinquished. A one-year order was subsequently issued after a hearing.⁸

c. 2016-2018 • CALIFORNIA

The California Department of Justice was warned about a 21-year-old man who, after he was fired, threatened to shoot coworkers. It was discovered that he had recently purchased a shotgun, but due to California's 10-day waiting period, the sale had not yet been completed. A temporary order was granted that ultimately blocked the sale, and police found 400 rounds of shotgun ammunition in his home. After a hearing that man participated in, a judge determined a final one-year order should be issued.⁹

2019 • EVANSVILLE, IN

A family member contacted police, saying that a man was in possession of multiple firearms and had made numerous comments about getting into a confrontation with law enforcement at his home. The next day, the same man called police, saying he had tied up his wife and was holding her at gunpoint. He gave the dispatcher specific instructions for law enforcement and said that if those instructions were not followed, "it would result in a bloodbath." Police were able to verify his wife's safety and then safely detain the man. Police later utilized the law, at family members' request, to remove 10 firearms, including multiple shotguns and rifles, as well as more than 200 rounds of ammunition.¹⁰

SEPTEMBER 2019 • PASADENA, MD

A 54-year-old man made multiple threats to shoot his coworkers. He was fired shortly afterwards, and his coworkers contacted the police with concerns about their safety. Officers obtained an order and removed 146 firearms, including at least one assault-style rifle, from the man's home.¹¹

SEPTEMBER 2019 • SEATTLE, WA

Family members contacted Seattle police about their 91-year-old relative with dementia after the man “began threatening to shoot anyone that came to his home.” An order was issued, and police removed 18 guns from his home.¹²

SEPTEMBER 2019 • WASHINGTON, DC

A 44-year-old man was exhibiting odd and erratic behavior in Washington, DC when registering his handgun at police headquarters. Authorities discovered the man had a pending assault case in Montgomery County, Maryland, had been investigated earlier in the year when police found a gun in the trunk of his car on a DC college campus, and had made a previous suicide attempt. DC police obtained an order and seized the man's handgun, as well as a semi-automatic rifle, from his home.¹³

SEPTEMBER 2019 • CAMDEN COUNTY, NJ

Police became aware of a 51-year-old man due to his alleged communications with the alleged Pittsburgh synagogue shooter and his online activity which often glorified violence against the Jewish community. Police visited the man's home in August 2019, where he initially refused to answer the door, was visibly agitated and angry, and mentioned to the officers that he believed “force or violence is necessary to realign society.” Based on this behavior, a judge issued an order a month later after New Jersey's Extreme Risk law went into effect, and police seized a semi-automatic rifle, ammunition and the man's firearms purchaser ID card.¹⁴

OCTOBER 2019 • WARREN COUNTY, NY

A 75-year-old man allegedly wrote a series of threatening letters to elected officials, which included comments that “someone should put a bullet in” an unidentified official. An investigator with the attorney general's office, responsible for investigating the letters, requested that the Warren County Sheriff's Office review the man's pistol permit. The sheriff's office obtained an order to temporarily revoke the man's handgun permit, and the man surrendered one handgun.¹⁵

OCTOBER 2019 • SEATTLE, WA

The suspected leader of the Atomwaffen Division in Washington, a neo-Nazi terrorist network, was amassing firearms and training with weapons in the western part of the state. A judge granted an order requiring the man to temporarily surrender all of his firearms. The Arlington and Seattle police departments seized eight firearms, including five assault-style rifles.¹⁶

NOVEMBER 2019 • PRINCETON & TRENTON, NJ

Trenton police received an anonymous tip expressing concerns about a 27-year-old man who had made multiple alarming posts on Facebook, including one threatening to attack a local Walmart. Trenton police and the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office obtained an order, and police removed seven guns and numerous rounds of ammunition from two separate apartments.¹⁷

DANGER OF GUNFIRE IN SCHOOLS

MAY 2018 • OSCEOLA COUNTY, FL

A janitor threatened to bring a gun to Parkway Middle School, and was reported to police by a teacher. He had told the teacher his only regret would be that his targets would “run for their lives before [he] could get to them.” After an order was issued, deputies removed a handgun from the man.¹⁸

MAY 2018 • ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FL

A high school student was stalking his ex-girlfriend after she broke up with him. At one point he attempted to punch a boy who was with her. The student also threatened to post private photos of the girl on social media, said he would kill himself if she didn't get back together with him, and posted photos of an AR-15 online. Two resource officers submitted affidavits for a petition against him, and all the firearms were removed from his home.¹⁹

2018 • MIDDLEBURY, VT

Two students at Middlebury Union Middle School were planning to shoot another student on campus and “anyone else.” Another student overheard this conversation and notified the school principal, who then called the police. One of the students was planning to get the guns from a relative. Prosecutors obtained a temporary 14-day order and removed 10 weapons that the student said he had access to, mainly handguns and hunting rifles, from the relative's home.²⁰

2018 • PORTLAND, OR

A judge granted a petition for a man who posed for photos with a semi-automatic rifle and had spoken openly about planning a school shooting.²¹

c. 2016-2018 • CALIFORNIA

A 21-year-old man posted statements online threatening his former high school. Two different acquaintances reported these posts to police, with one person reporting a post that appeared to show the man holding an AR-type rifle. The school was closed the following day. A temporary ex parte order was obtained, and a full order was issued after a hearing.²²

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

APRIL 2018 • SUNRISE, FL

A man admitted his plans to kill his estranged wife, her sister, and their pastor to his church congregation. Police filed a petition, and a judge ultimately ordered both the man's handgun and concealed-weapons license removed.²³

2018 • MID-CITY, CA

A man locked his wife in a car with him and began to threaten her with a loaded firearm. Police searched the car and found two loaded firearms that did not belong to him. An order was issued, and the two handguns were removed.²⁴

2018 • LA JOLLA, CA

A 40-year-old man told his fiancée in a text message that he wanted to shoot her in the head. He then threatened her ex-boyfriend while holding a knife behind his back. An order was issued, and a handgun and an assault rifle were removed from his possession.²⁵

2018 • BROOKINGS, OR

After going home with a newly purchased handgun and consuming alcohol, a man argued with his wife. As the argument escalated, he then took out his gun. His wife made a phone call to another man to let him know her husband would not let her leave, and her husband began threatening to kill the other man. Police arrived minutes later. A judge issued an order to remove his gun and the man relinquished his handgun.²⁶

DANGER OF SELF-HARM

MAY 2018 • ROSEVILLE, CA

The Roseville Police Department responded to a relative's call about a man armed with a handgun and threatening suicide inside his home. When the officers could not convince him to come out of the house after several hours, they returned later with a gun violence restraining order and removed his firearms.²⁷

2018 • MISSION VALLEY, CA

The girlfriend of a 28-year-old man tried to call for help after her boyfriend grabbed a gun case and threatened suicide. The man threw his girlfriend to the ground to prevent her from doing so. An issue was ordered and police removed five firearms.²⁸

DECEMBER 2019 • NEW LEBANON, NY

A 51-year-old man was arrested for illegally possessing a firearm and for shooting a car. Following his arraignment, the man made statements regarding harming himself, prompting authorities to obtain an order. Police seized a pistol and seven long guns from the man, who ultimately waived a formal hearing to have his guns returned. His firearms were ordered to be removed for a year.²⁹

DECEMBER 2019 • CRANSTON, RI

Two days before Christmas, a concerned individual contacted police regarding a text message they had received, which contained an image of a man holding a firearm in a position that was threatening suicide. Police officers subsequently went to the man's house, where he told the officers he had a firearm in the home and was intending to die by suicide. Police then obtained an order to temporarily remove the man's firearm.³⁰

OTHER

2018 • LAKE COUNTY, IN

A woman called 911 after her husband locked himself in a bathroom. He was on psychiatric medications for mental illness and was having delusions that people were hiding in the attic. Police arrived at the home and calmed the man down. The next morning, police arrived at the home again, responding to a similar disturbance, and removed all firearms after an order was granted.³¹

2018 • GRIFFITH, IN

Griffith police removed the weapons from the home of a man who was suffering from dementia-like symptoms and was displaying erratic and dangerous behavior.³²

2018 • DEERFIELD BEACH, FL

A court ordered a man not to have access to guns when he was released on bond after being arrested for shooting at a friend with whom he had recently had an argument. Law enforcement requested an order to ensure he could not access firearms. After the man refused to voluntarily surrender his firearms, law enforcement obtained a search warrant and found multiple firearms and hundreds of rounds of ammunition.³³

JANUARY 2020 • DENVER, CO

At the end of 2019, a 26-year-old man voluntarily turned over his firearms to Denver police during a domestic violence investigation. The man was suspected of beating his wife and had made suicidal statements on numerous occasions when talking with police. One day after Colorado's Extreme Risk law took effect in 2020, a judge granted a police officer's request to temporarily keep the man's confiscated guns as the investigation continued.³⁴

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