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Accidental shooting claims teen

S.L. boy is 3rd victim in valley in 3 months

By [Derek Jensen](#)

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A 14-year-old boy was killed Friday while he and a friend were playing with two sawed-off shotguns and two handguns — the third accidental shooting death of a child in the Salt Lake Valley within the past three months.

Police say the shooting appears to be accidental but are still trying to determine where and how the teenager and his 13-year-old friend obtained the weapons. The boy was shot in the head about 12:30 p.m. while he and the friend were playing with the guns, Salt Lake Police Lt. John Cardona said. Homicide detectives were interviewing the victim's friend to try and piece together the incident. No one else witnessed the shooting.

"We have a lot of questions about how a 14-year-old and 13-year-old get a hold of a handgun," Cardona said.

Marla Kennedy, executive director of the Gun Violence Prevention Center of Utah is equally curious. Her organization has worked for several years toward the passage of laws that would provide stiffer penalties for adults who fail to keep guns locked away from children.

"We've proposed legislation in hopes to diffuse this problem for upwards of 10 years in this state and it has not gotten anywhere," a frustrated Kennedy said Friday after hearing of the latest incident. "The first dead child shot by another child should have been enough for us. "

Since the state of Utah does not compile statistics on accidental shootings, Kennedy's organization has started compiling its own figures based on media reports since 1988. Friday's death brought the total number of Utah children killed in an accidental shooting since 1988 to 64. Six of those deaths have occurred since last February, Kennedy said.

"These aren't accidental shootings, these are what we call unintentional shootings," she said. "Leaving a loaded weapon where a kid can get it is not an accident. . . . We are putting the onus of gun safety in the hands of children and I think that borderlines on immoral."

Neighbors living in the area expressed sadness and shock over Friday's shooting.

"It's a neighborhood that has its share of problems but nothing like this," said one neighbor, who declined to give his name but said he hears gunshots in the area on a weekly basis.

Police say the two decided to skip school together on Friday and went to the 14-year-old boy's house, near 630 S. 1200 West. The shooting happened inside the boy's bedroom, but it was unclear if anyone else was home at the time, Cardona said. The 14-year-old boy's mother was at the home by the time detectives arrived.

The boy was pronounced dead at the scene. His 13-year-old friend was taken into police custody, Cardona said.

"He was traumatized," Cardona said of the boy. "Everyone's very panicked."

A 15-year-old boy died from an accidental, self-inflicted gunshot wound in June, only a few blocks from the site of Friday's incident.

In another accidental shooting, a 12-year-old boy was killed Sept. 8 after he and a friend were playing with a .40-caliber semiautomatic pistol at a house near 9500 South and 1100 West.

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