

# A Close Look At Quick-Access Gun Safes

by Staff

We're looking at a class of safe/vault that came about by both common sense and, in some states, law.

Human nature prevailing, many have kept loaded pistols under their pillow, in the drawer of a bedside stand or in the "sock drawer." While making the weapon readily accessible, it became too much so to the prying eyes and hands of children. Even if your child or grandchild had been properly trained about guns, they may have little visiting friend who aren't.

Our history has revealed some tragic stores of accidental homicides resulting from too easy access to loaded guns. Many states now hold the homeowner liable in such cases. The anti-gunners have been quick to use such tragic happenings to their advantages. This has resulted in such things as trigger locks, either as an internal part of the pistol or as a separate item.

The results of such "safety" attention made the pistol useless as a defensive weapon. Necessity being the mother of invention, we now have gun safes/vaults designed that are supposed to offer both security and easy/quick access — but do they?

Easy/quick access eliminates regular combination locks — even key operated locks. The opening device had to work, even if you were half-sleep and fumbling around. Therefore, we narrowed our attention to two safes that represent two of the most prevalent designs.

- A. Fingerprint recognition operated locks.
- B. Finger placement and pressing a predetermined sequence of pressure switches.

For group A, we chose the **Barska gun safe** to test. This Barska gun safe measures internally about 16 inches



<http://www.barska.com>

wide, 14 inches deep and 7 inches high. It is quite big enough to hold jewelry, medicine, important papers, silverware or, the more typical — guns. It will hold several handguns.

Externally, it measures 16.5 inches wide, 14.5 inches deep and 7.75 inches high. This allows it to be secured inside a cabinet or other convenient place you desire.

**The typical description and, unfortunately, some reviews state:** "It goes without saying, that since this is a 'fingerprint safe' it can be easily opened with the touch of a finger — whether it be yours, your spouses or some other

approved person. The advanced technology of it allows up to 30 fingerprints to be stored. This means you don't have to fumble for keys or quickly try and remember (and enter) its combination. Simply "touch and go."

Before wasting a lot of words, the Barska gun safe fail our test completely! In fact, all "fingerprint" activated locks should be eliminated as a quick access device. In theory, yes — however, in life or death situations — **NEVER!**

It took me over 20 attempts to program just one fingerprint into it. Using that print to open the safe required even

more. Now, if that wasn't bad enough, it has a loud little horn that "beeps" with ever thing you do. In the quiet of the night, the blasted thing can be heard from anywhere in your house. This has the potential of telling an uninvited prowler that you're having trouble opening your gun safe and, also, where you're located!

If you're skilled in small mechanisms and working with printed circuit

board electronics, it's an easy job to remove the horn — however, you have to break a warrantee seal to get to it. I did and now my Barska can't bark!

OK, the horn beeping had been eliminated, but it still took numerous tries to open it. An absolute failure for it's intended purpose — quick access to your gun. This seems to be an universal problem with fingerprint operated locks. Theoretically, its a good idea. However,

in the real world, not everyone has perfect fingerprints and even then they must be clean and dry — and perfectly aligned with the reader.

Therefore, we must turn thumbs down, not only on the Barske safe, but all fingerprint operated locks. They simply don't work like the advertisements or movies depict them.

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For group **B**, we chose a small safe made by **Gun Vault, Inc.**

They present 2 sizes, the Mini and the Multi and both are available in the Standard and Deluxe versions.

The Mini measures 8.1 in wide x 4.9 high (in front - tapers down in back) x 12 deep.

The Multi measures 10.1 in wide x 7.9 high (in front - tapers down in back) x 14 deep. It is equipped with a shelf to accomidate more guns or jewelry, etc.

The Deluxe versions have the following additional features:

1. Internal courtesy light.
2. Motion detecting and audible alarm.
3. Power connection jack for included external power transformer.

These "features" add over \$20.00 to the cost and we consider them useless for the following reasons: a.) the light only wastes battery power. b.) the safe should be securely fastened to shelf, etc. - the safe shouldn't move. c.) never rely on AC house power which may be disabled.

We recommend the Mini - Standard version which is available from places like Amazon.com for well under \$100.

The feature we didn't particularly like was the elaborate "Patented" switch/finger location device. Not all hands/fingers are the same size and their arrangement in no guarantee that your fingers will be exactly over the too-small switch.



<http://www.gunvault.com>

We found this required some "training" to insure opening the safe on the first try. They even mark each finger grove with raised dots, representing some strange braille way of identifying in the dark. It isn't even standard braille!

The stupidity in their fancy finger/switch device, that they even patented, is almost amusing. It would have been better to simply have 4 buttons about an inch apart in a straight line, on the top front edge. Oh, well, get use to it and practice until you can reliably open the safe on the first try, ten times in a row.

We recommend the Mini size because it should only be used for your defense gun, spare magazine and, a small, powerful flashlight. If you want to protect more guns and/or the family jewels — get a second safe.

These safes all use 8 - AA batteries which require a bit of detextarity to install/replace. Also, keep one of the emergency keys securely hidden, nearby.

Change the batteries once a year or when indicated.