

Obtaining a handgun permit requires investigation

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nal history and felony convictions," said Farmington Hills Inspector Thomas Godwin, in charge of records.

A purchase permit cannot be issued to an applicant who has been convicted of a felony within the last eight years or has been confined to a mental institution (unless they can prove they have been judged sane), according to state law.

But the final say whether an applicant gets a purchase permit or not is up to the chief of police.

Once the chief signs the purchase permit, the applicant has 10 days to buy the handgun and another 10 days to return to the police department so a safety inspection certificate on the weapon can be issued. One permit is needed for each handgun bought, Lauhoff said.

FROM HIS experience, Lauhoff said, about 99 percent of the residents who receive a purchase permit buy their handgun and return to the police department for the final phase of registration.

"Most of the time people know (before they apply for a purchase permit) what they want to buy," Lauhoff said, adding that the purchase permit also allows a dealer to sell a handgun.

Once a handgun is purchased, the applicant must return to the police department for a safety check. That consists of taking down the weapon's serial numbers, checking them through the police computers to make sure the firearm is not stolen and finally checking the weapon itself.

"It doesn't really authorize that they (the handguns) are in workable condition," Lauhoff said.

While the permit process for

handguns that are not intended to be concealed does not determine whether the gun is workable or whether the handgun owner knows how to use the weapon, there are some good reasons for registration.

"It enables us to know who has weapons and who doesn't," Lauhoff said.

In addition, the registration process allows the local police to check whether the weapon has ever been used in a crime or whether it is stolen, Godwin said.

"The real need for us to be involved in it (registering handguns) is that there is an obligation that someone effort is made that law-abiding citizens are getting them and not criminals with records," Godwin said.

FIREARMS, BOTH handguns and long guns (rifles and shotguns) are "a high target for being stolen," Godwin said. "There is a big market out there

for illegal guns."

Lauhoff agreed.

"Usually if a home is being burglarized and there are hand guns, they are usually taken," he said.

Although the police do not keep track of the reasons why someone wants to buy a handgun, both Godwin and Lauhoff mention protection, collecting and target shooting as reasons for purchase.

"As far as type, we've seen them all," Godwin said.

The most popular though are the medium-priced, snub nose, .38-caliber handguns, Godwin added. The most popular brand names are Colt and Smith-Wesson, he said.

But it is the collectors who bring in the most expensive weapons ranging \$300-\$400, Godwin said.

Although residents who buy handguns legally have permits to pos-

sess them, they are not in any way allowed to carry or conceal these weapons, Lauhoff said.

"You are not to be carrying it around all the time," Godwin said, adding the handgun may be taken where it will left permanently or for repairs. And in those cases, it must be transported unloaded and in a container.

For those who want to carry a concealed handgun, there's a little more formality to the registration process. And there better be a pretty good reason why someone wants to carry a concealed weapon.

ALTHOUGH THE local police departments do the initial paperwork, fingerprinting and checking for criminal records, the Oakland County Gun Board has the task of determining who will get the concealed weapon permit.

The gun board issues two kinds of

concealed weapon permits. The first and most restrictive is the general permit usually only issued to police officers and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) officers, Brown said.

"Oakland County is very restrictive on generals," she said. "They are concerned. They don't want to give a general to just anyone."

The second type is the restricted permit. This permit is issued mostly to business people ported to hunting areas.

Just because a person may own a business doesn't mean the gun board automatically issues a restricted permit.

"They have to come before the board," Brown said, adding the applicant must provide proof of business ownership and say why a concealed weapon is necessary.

They come in all sizes and styles

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"We basically do it on a need basis," Wozniak said, adding "there is no way of telling how many" are in the property room.

Because of the cramped quarters in the Farmington Hills property room, firearms — rifles, shotguns, sawed-off shotguns, pellet and air guns, military weapons, and handguns — are on the floor, shelves and some in gun racks waiting for their trip to Lansing.

When and how often the police make the trip to Lansing boils down to how much room both the Farmington and Farmington Hills department has for

storing the weapons.

"There is no requirement as to when we destroy them," said Frank Lauhoff, director of the Farmington Department of Public Safety.

Like Farmington Hills, the Farmington police also hold on to illegal or unregistered firearms as well as those used in crimes or those brought in by residents who no longer want their firearms, Lauhoff said.

Although local departments, such as Farmington and Farmington Hills go through the required checks of firearms, the weapons are double-checked once they arrive in Lansing, Dotts said.

Of the total 6,307 handguns turned into the state police in 1984, Dotts said, 80 percent were not legally registered with a local police department.

"We don't have access to the police reports, but that (not being legally registered) probably is not why they were confiscated," Dotts said.

Determining what type of firearm most frequently arrives at the state police to be destroyed is difficult, Dotts continued. But both "the cheap and the expensive" are sent to the melting pot, she added.

"Saturday Night Specials" are a common item coming through the division, Dotts said. But she cautioned that

all snub nose revolvers or other short barrel handgun (such as those made by Colt or Smith-Wesson) can be classified as "specials."

The true "Saturday Night Specials" are those cheaply-made handguns manufactured overseas following World War II, Dotts said.

"They cost \$19.95, and they are worth \$19.95," she said.

Unfortunately, Dotts said, many of this type of firearms is still being produced, but only the parts are being manufactured overseas.

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In the same light, the other parts of the funeral service all have their place and importance. People gather together, acknowledge the death, share in the grief, participate in the mourning rites, and witness the final disposition of the body.

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