SAGA Media Release – 19 August 2026

COMPLIANCE ALERT | SAPS Tracing Firearms in Deceased Estates – Families Urged to Check Compliance

Issued by the SAGA Board of Trustees

The South African Gunowners' Association (SAGA) has received reports of SAPS members in the **Western Cape contacting families and visiting addresses linked to deceased firearm owners** in order to trace firearms and check compliance with the Firearms Control Act.

These reports are consistent with an established Western Cape SAPS tracing initiative.

SAPS previously indicated that approximately **36,000 firearms remained registered to deceased owners in the province**. By March 2026, more than **7,000 people in possession of firearms still registered to deceased owners had reportedly been traced**.

SAGA has not established that similar tracing activity is presently taking place on the same scale nationally. However, SAPS stations in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng have also issued public calls during 2026 concerning firearms linked to deceased estates.

This is therefore not an issue firearm-owning families should ignore.

Do Not Wait For SAPS To Arrive At The Door

When a licensed firearm owner dies, the firearm does **not automatically pass into the lawful possession of an heir or family member**.

There are specific requirements governing its possession, storage, administration and eventual transfer or disposal. An executor, heir or relative who simply retains a deceased person's firearm without dealing with its legal status may expose themselves to unnecessary legal difficulty.

The practical questions are straightforward:

- Where is the firearm?
- Who currently has possession or control of it?
- Is it being lawfully and securely stored?
- Has the executor dealt with the required SAPS/DFO notifications?
- Is there a documented plan to transfer, sell, store, surrender or deactivate it?

If the answer to any of these questions is uncertain, **deal with it now rather than when SAPS makes contact.**

SAGA Can Help Owners Understand The Process

SAGA has produced **Factsheet 401 - Firearms in a Deceased Estate**, a practical educational guide covering the responsibilities of executors and heirs, temporary possession and storage, SAPS documentation, transfer to heirs or dealers, surrender, deactivation and estate finalisation.

Many firearm owners and their families will not previously have had reason to consider these requirements.

Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of SAGA Factsheet 401 may contact the SAGA office at saga@saga.org.za.

The July 2026 edition of **On Target Africa** also carried a useful feature, *The Last Responsibility of a Firearm Owner*, dealing with the broader responsibility of planning for firearms as part of one's estate and the difficulties families can face when this is not addressed.

That message deserves repeating:
Estate planning for firearms should take place while the firearm owner is still alive - not after the family is left trying to establish what must happen next.

SAGA Calls For Clear National Communication

SAGA supports lawful and responsible administration of firearms in deceased estates.

At the same time, we call on SAPS to communicate **clearly, consistently and nationally** about the scope of its current tracing initiative, the procedures being followed and whether the Western Cape programme is being expanded to other provinces.

Families who genuinely want to comply should be given clear information on how to do so.

Responsible firearm ownership does not end when the licence holder dies. Plan for it. Document it. And if a firearm is already sitting in a deceased estate, establish its legal status before it becomes a problem for the family.

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Sources and acknowledgements:

- Firearms Control Act 60 of 2000 and Regulations.
- **SAGA Factsheet 401 – *Firearms in a Deceased Estate.***
- News24, 22 December 2025 – Western Cape SAPS tracing firearms linked to deceased owners.
- News24, 5 March 2026 – update on Western Cape deceased-estate firearm tracing.
- Rising Sun Chatsworth, April 2026 – SAPS deceased-estate firearm compliance communication, KwaZulu-Natal.
- Southern Courier / The Citizen, May 2026 – SAPS deceased-estate firearm compliance communication, Gauteng.
- *On Target Africa*, July 2026 – *The Last Responsibility of a Firearm Owner*.

ANNEXURE A
FIREARMS IN A DECEASED ESTATE – QUICK COMPLIANCE GUIDE

This is a condensed practical guide only. Individual circumstances may differ.

1. Secure and identify the firearms

Establish exactly what firearms, firearm parts and ammunition belonged to the deceased.

Record, where available:

- make and model;
- calibre;
- serial number;
- ammunition held;
- licence details; and
- present storage location.

Do not simply move or take possession of a firearm because you are an heir or relative.

2. Establish who the executor is

Once formally appointed, the executor assumes responsibility for dealing with the firearms in the estate.

The executor should ensure that the firearms are properly secured and that the required SAPS notifications and records are dealt with.

3. Check the present possession and storage arrangement

A firearm belonging to a deceased person must remain lawfully stored and controlled while the estate process is underway.
Where temporary possession or alternative storage is necessary, the appropriate SAPS/DFO authorisation and documentation may be required.

Do not assume that keeping the firearm in the family home automatically makes the possession lawful.

4. Notify and maintain contact with the DFO
The executor should deal with the prescribed notification process through the local **Designated Firearms Officer (DFO)** and maintain a proper paper trail.
Keep copies of:

- forms submitted;
- correspondence;
- receipts and acknowledgements;
- storage documentation; and
- transfer or disposal documents.

5. Decide what will happen to each firearm
Depending on the circumstances, a firearm may ultimately be:

- licensed to an eligible heir or buyer;
- transferred to or stored with a licensed firearm dealer;
- surrendered for destruction; or
- lawfully deactivated.

An inheritance does **not** itself constitute a firearm licence.

6. Do not forget the ammunition
Ammunition belonging to the deceased must also be identified and lawfully stored.
Possession of ammunition is regulated separately and should not simply be assumed to be lawful because it formed part of the deceased's property.

7. Close the paper trail
The firearm component of the estate should not simply disappear from the administration process.
Ensure that documentation confirming the ultimate transfer, disposal, destruction or deactivation is retained with the estate records.

Do not wait for a compliance visit to discover that the firearm arrangements in an estate were never properly dealt with.

Need More Information?

For a copy of: ***SAGA Factsheet 401 – Firearms in a Deceased Estate***
Contact us at:

SAGA Office Email: saga@saga.org.za / **Tel:** 031 562 9951

Also see the July 2026 edition of **On Target Africa**: *The Last Responsibility of a Firearm Owner.*