

Mass Shootings Committed by Concealed Handgun Permit Holders
May 2007 to the Present

This subset of the total number of people killed by concealed handgun permit holders contains vignettes describing the circumstances for incidents in which individuals with permits to carry concealed handguns killed three or more persons (not including the shooter) in one incident. The descriptions include the current, known status of any charges filed against the permit holder as well as noting instances where the perpetrator committed suicide.

The Violence Policy Center welcomes any new information regarding the status of any case (with verifiable source(s)). Use this link to contact the VPC: <http://www.vpc.org/contact.htm>.

Alabama

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** Michael McLendon

SUICIDE

Date: March 10, 2009

People Killed: 11 (including shooter)

Circumstances: On March 10, 2009, Michael McLendon, a self-proclaimed survivalist, killed his mother at their family home, beginning a shooting rampage that stretched across 24 miles. By the time McLendon took his own life in the midst of a police shootout at a factory where he had previously worked, he had shot four more relatives, including his 74-year-old grandmother, and five strangers, including the wife and 18-month-old daughter of a local sheriff's deputy. McLendon had a concealed handgun permit for two handguns. Police later found at the home he shared with his mother numerous how-to DVDs on committing acts of violence.

Source: "Officials: Alabama shooter depressed over failures," *Associated Press* at philstar.com, March 13, 2009.

Florida

Concealed Handgun Permit Holder: Paul Michael Merhige

PENDING

Date: November 26, 2009

People Killed: 4

Circumstances: On Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 2009, Paul Michael Merhige allegedly opened fire at his family's Thanksgiving dinner shooting six relatives, killing four. The deceased victims were his twin sisters (one of whom was pregnant), his 76-year-old aunt, and a six-year-old cousin. As he left the scene, Merhige was quoted by one witness as saying, "I have been waiting 20 years for this." Merhige then fled, and has since been featured on "America's Most Wanted." Merhige bought two pistols and a rifle the day before the shooting according to the gun shop owner who sold them to him. Merhige had a concealed handgun permit.

Source: "Thanksgiving Massacre Gun Bought in Fort Lauderdale: Merhige bought three guns a day before killing four family members," *NBC Miami*, December 4, 2009; "4 Killed at Dinner; Florida Police Seek Gunman," *New York Times*, November 28, 2009.

Florida

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** Guillermo Zarabozo

CONVICTED

Date: September 2007

People Killed: 4

Circumstances: On September 22, 2007, Guillermo Zarabozo and Kirby Archer hired Jake Branam, captain of the 47-foot charter boat *Joe Cool*, his wife and mother of his two children Kelley Branam, and crew mates Scott Gamble and Samuel Kairy to take them from Miami Beach to Bimini in the Bahamas. When the boat did not return to Florida, the Coast Guard was contacted and they found the *Joe Cool* abandoned roughly 30 miles north of Cuba. Zarabozo and Archer were found the next morning on an inflatable lifeboat about 12 miles away from the *Joe Cool*. Zarabozo claimed that Cuban hijackers had seized the boat at sea and killed the crew. Archer eventually confessed to killing the Branams on the fly bridge of the boat while Zarabozo killed Gamble and Kairy in the cabin below. Zarabozo worked for private investigation and security companies and had a concealed handgun permit. Four days before chartering the *Joe Cool*, Zarabozo was accepted as an applicant to become a Miami-Dade police officer. Zarabozo was found guilty of the four murders and sentenced to five consecutive terms of life imprisonment and an additional 85 years imprisonment to be served consecutively to the life sentences for the first-degree murders of the crew of the *Joe Cool*.

Source: "Information Issued by U.S. Attorney's Office for Southern District of Florida on May 6: Defendant Sentenced on Murder Charges in Connection with Joe Cool Voyage," (May 6, 2009, Press Release), *U.S. Fed News*, May 18, 2009; "Joe Cool defendant had applied to become a Miami-Dade cop," *Miami Herald*, September 17, 2008; "Joe Cool suspect gullible, jury told," *Miami Herald*, September 16, 2008; "High seas mystery full of twists, contradictions," *Associated Press*, October 15, 2007; "Lost at sea," *Newsweek*, September 28, 2007.

Idaho

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** Jason Kenneth Hamilton

SUICIDE

Date: May 19, 2007

Total Killed: 4 (including shooter)

Total Wounded: 3

Law Enforcement Officers Killed: 1

Circumstances: On May 19, 2007, Jason Kenneth Hamilton, a member of the white supremacist group Aryan Nation, shot and killed his wife, a police officer, and a church sexton, and wounded three others before turning the gun on himself in a shooting spree in Moscow, Idaho. Hamilton had a concealed handgun permit “despite a [previous] domestic violence conviction that should have barred him from owning guns.” He also possessed a federally registered fully-automatic AK-47 machine gun, one of the guns he used in the shooting spree.

Source: “Shooter Linked to Aryans; Killer also had federal license for automatic weapons,” *Spokesman Review*, May 23, 2007; “Authorities investigate Hamilton’s gun purchase; Mass killer apparently obtained the automatic weapon late in 2004 or early in 2005; Ambush aftermath,” *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, May 24, 2007.

Michigan

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** Troy Brake

CONVICTED

Date: September 29, 2008

People Killed: 4

Circumstances: On September 29, 2008, Troy Brake, 31, shot to death 52-year-old Sharmaine Zimmer, her sons, Tyler (age 17) and Jeremy (age 20), and beat to death Jeremy's girlfriend, university student Katherine Brown (age 18). Brake once lived next door to the Zimmers and had lived with them for a time while growing up. At trial, the jury was told that Brake shot the Zimmers to death in order to have sex with Brown, and that he then doused the lower half of Brown's body with gasoline. The Zimmers' house was set on fire and destroyed. A month after the attack, police arrested Brake for beating up a prostitute and found that a 40 caliber Glock pistol owned by Brake was linked to the earlier murders. Brake, who had a concealed handgun permit, was convicted of first degree murder in the deaths of the Zimmer family and Katherine Brown. He was also convicted of assault and rape of the prostitute he had attacked.

Source: "Victims' families applaud investigators, prosecutor after Troy Brake is found guilty of four Wright Township murders," *The Grand Rapids Press*, May 28, 2009; "Jurors will have Troy Brake's testimony to consider Thursday," *The Grand Rapids Press*, March 25, 2009.

New York

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** Frank Garcia

CONVICTED

Date: February 14, 2009

People Killed: 4

People Wounded: 1

Circumstances: On February 14, 2009, Frank Garcia allegedly opened fire with a .40 Glock pistol in the Lakeside Memorial Hospital parking lot in Brockport, NY. He had recently been fired by the hospital. He shot three people there, killing two, before killing a married couple at their home in Canandaigua. Garcia had been denied a permit to carry a pistol three times in the previous 15 years due to previous arrests for assault, harassment, and criminal possession of a weapon, before a judge granted him the ability to carry a concealed weapon in 2007. Garcia faced four charges of murder, and one charge of attempted murder. He was convicted and received a life sentence without possibility of parole for two of the murders, and is awaiting trial on two additional charges of murder and one charge of attempted murder.

Source: "Garcia evidence allowed by judge," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, October 31, 2009; "After 3rd try, gun permit OK'd," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, February 19, 2009; "Damelio will represent Garcia in Monroe Trial," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, July 1, 2009; "Killer gets life for Valentine's Day rampage in NY," *Associated Press*, September 1, 2009

North Carolina

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** William Maxwell

SUICIDE

Date: November 2, 2009

People Killed: 4 (including shooter)

Circumstances: On November 2, 2009, William Maxwell shot and killed his wife Kathryn and their teenage children Connor and Cameron before killing himself. Neighbors could not say what drove a local businessman and basketball coach at the religious school where his teenagers attended classes to murder his family. Friends described the Maxwells as active churchgoers and good neighbors. Earlier on the day of the shooting, friends and relatives had gathered at the family's home to "see if they could lift the normally happy dad from his funk." Maxwell obtained a concealed handgun permit in January 2008.

Source: "Friends tried to help NC man who killed family," *The Associated Press*, November 5, 2009; "Police: NC father killed wife, 2 children, self," *The Associated Press*, November 3, 2009.

Ohio

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** Terrance Hough Jr.

CONVICTED

Date: July 4, 2007

People Killed: 3

People Wounded: 2

Circumstances: On July 4, 2007, firefighter Terrance Hough Jr. used a 40 caliber pistol to shoot and kill neighbor Jacob Feichtner as well as Bruce Anderson and Katherine Rosby as a result of a dispute over fireworks the three were setting off. Hough also shot and injured Donny Walsh and Katherine Nicholas. Police seized 12 firearms from Hough's home after his arrest. Hough's fellow firefighters described him as a "ticking time bomb that finally exploded," and one noted, "I hope I'm off the day Hough snaps." Hough, who had received his concealed handgun permit in 2004, was convicted of three counts of aggravated murder and two counts of attempted murder and was sentenced to life in prison with no parole.

Source: "Judge denies bail for man charged in July Fourth slayings," *Associated Press*, July 9, 2007; "Hough Guilty, Could Get Death Penalty," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 16, 2008; "Firefighter gets life sentence in killings over fireworks," *Associated Press*, May 22, 2008; "Hough known for bursts of anger," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 7, 2007; "Firefighter in fatal shootings may face death penalty," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 8, 2007.

Pennsylvania

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** George Sodini

SUICIDE

Date: August 4, 2009

People Killed: 4 (including shooter)

Circumstances: On August 4, 2009, George Sodini, 48, opened fire at an LA Fitness Center in Collier, Pennsylvania, killing three women and wounding nine others before turning the gun on himself. Sodini entered the club shortly before 8:00 PM armed with two 9mm pistols with 30-round clips, a .45 pistol, and a .32 pistol. He was also carrying two additional 30-round clips in a gym bag. Sodini then walked into an exercise class where an aerobics class was underway and turned the lights off. He then walked further into the room and started firing, emptying one of his 9mm pistols. Drawing the second 9mm, he opened fire again, stopping with 12 rounds still in the clip. Sodini fired at least 36 rounds from his two 9mm pistols before shooting himself in the head with the .45 handgun. The entire episode lasted approximately one minute. A note recovered from Sodini's bag complained about being rejected by women and expressed his hatred toward them. Detectives found four rifles and shotguns in his house as well as a typewritten note in which Sodini said he planned to kill himself. Sodini had a concealed handgun permit and legally possessed the guns used in the shooting. In his blog, Sodini revealed that he had attempted to carry out the shooting on a prior occasion, entering the club with loaded weapons, but did not go through with the attack. In the journal he also expressed rage at family members and frustration at not being able to "connect" with women. The day before the shooting he wrote, "I took off today, Monday, and tomorrow to practice my routine and make sure it is well polished. I need to work out every detail, there is only one shot....Total effort needed. Tomorrow is the big day."

Source: "LA Fitness shooter had lethal plan," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 6, 2009.

Pennsylvania

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** Richard Poplawski

PENDING

Date: April 4, 2009

Total Killed: 3

Total Wounded: 1

Law Enforcement Officers Killed: 3

Law Enforcement Officers Wounded: 1

Circumstances: On April 4, 2009, white supremacist Richard Poplawski allegedly shot and killed police officers Stephen Mayhle, Paul Sciallo, and Eric Kelly while injuring another. Poplawski used an AK-47 assault rifle and a pistol in the attack. He had a concealed handgun permit despite a former girlfriend having obtained a protection-from-abuse order against him. Poplawski's mother told police that he had been "stockpiling guns and ammunition...because he believed that as a result of the economic collapse, the police were no longer able to protect society." She additionally stated that "her son 'only liked police when they were not curtailing his constitutional rights, which he was determined to protect.'" Poplawski was charged with three counts of criminal homicide and one count of aggravated assault. He has pled not guilty. Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

Source: "Poplawski bought guns through shop in Wilksburg," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 7, 2009; "Who is Richard Poplawski? Friends, Family Talk About Pittsburgh Suspect in Police Officers' Triple-Killing," *ThePittsburghChannel.com*, April 6, 2009; "Pittsburgh police shooting arraigned by computer," *Associated Press* at *philly.com*, June 1, 2009.

Utah

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** Justin Matern

SUICIDE

Date: December 17, 2009

People Killed: 4 (including shooter)

Circumstances: On December 17, 2009, Justin Matern shot and killed his wife and two sons, ages six and four, before turning the gun on himself. Matern killed his family members at the apartment his wife had moved into after leaving him. Prior to the shooting, Matern wrote a note he left at work describing his plans. He also sent text messages after the killings. The couple had experienced money problems including state-imposed tax liens in 2004 and 2008. Relatives said that Matern was distraught over the separation from his wife. Matern's daughter said that he obtained his concealed handgun permit when the family had previously lived in a Salt Lake City neighborhood that he feared was unsafe.

Source: "Murdered family had money troubles, anxieties," *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 19, 2009.

Virginia

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** Christopher Speight

PENDING

Date: January 19, 2010

People Killed: 8

Circumstances: On January 19, 2010, Christopher Speight allegedly shot and killed eight people including his sister and her husband, their 15-year-old daughter and four-year-old son, as well as two teenagers aged 15 and 16. The incident began when police responded to reports of a wounded man on the side of an unpaved road. Sheriff's deputies then found seven more bodies. As police converged on the scene, Speight fired a high-powered rifle at least four times at a state police helicopter, rupturing its gas tank and forcing it to land. Speight was described by co-workers as a handyman, construction worker, and security guard who had a longtime fascination with guns and a fear of government conspiracies. Speight enjoyed target shooting at a range on his property. According to neighbors, prior to the shooting Speight began shooting daily on his range, including high-powered rifles. Speight, troubled about a perceived family dispute over a house and land, owned as many as 40 guns and was said to be very skilled with weapons. A bomb squad discovered a "multitude" of explosive devices in Speight's home. Speight had a concealed handgun permit issued in 1999. His most recent application was filed in January 2009 which was "seen and agreed to" by the Appomattox Commonwealth's Attorney and approved by a circuit court judge. The day after the shooting Speight, wearing a bulletproof vest, surrendered to police. Speight was initially charged with one count of murder, and more murder charges were expected to be forthcoming.

Source: "Appomattox rampage suspect faces murder count," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 21, 2010; "Attorney: Va. killing suspect had mental problems," *Associated Press*, January 21, 2010.

Virginia

- **Concealed Handgun Permit Holder:** Aaron Poseidon Jackson

SUICIDE

Date: May 5, 2008

People Killed: 4 (including shooter)

Circumstances: On May 5, 2008, Aaron Poseidon Jackson, 24, shot and killed his two children, one-year-old Aaron Neptune Jackson and two-year-old Nicole Aaron Jackson, and their mother Latasha Nicole Thomas, before taking his own life. Jackson, who had a concealed handgun permit, was wearing body armor and was surrounded by guns and ammunition when police found him dead in their home in the Walt Lou Trailer Park. Jackson shot his wife with an AK-47 type WASR-10 assault rifle. He shot his children, found in a crib in a bedroom they shared, with a Smith & Wesson .38 revolver. Jackson killed himself with the revolver. Police later searched the trailer and seized at least seven guns, six knives, a machete, a sword, and numerous boxes of ammunition.

Source: "Police: Man killed children and their mother before turning gun on himself," *fredericksburg.com*, May 6, 2008; Stafford County Sheriffs Office Incident Report.