



Five Questions for Dale Weathers, Browning Gun Safe Product Manager

The Browning difference.

Recently we had the chance to talk to Dale Weathers, product manager for the Browning ProSteel line of gun safes. Weathers is charged with maintaining Browning ProSteel safes as the most respected brand in the industry and to continue to build on a 30-year tradition of innovation and improvement. This is no small task. His insights will help you choose the right safe to purchase for your guns and other valuables.

1.

Q. Many gun safes look pretty much the same and it is hard to tell how much protection they offer -- so how do I tell the difference between a great safe and a marginal safe?

A. I guess the short answer is watch out for "smoke and mirrors" and "bells and whistles" on some safes. A large portion of gun safe advertising is just hype. It's there to distract you from the merits of the design itself.

If you want to make sure you don't make a mistake you have two choices when buying a gun safe. First, you can buy a top-of-the-line safe from a company you have experience with and trust. Or, second, you can become somewhat of a personal expert on gun safe design and features. We like to recommend that you do both. Learn as much as you can about what makes a gun safe effective so you can make the right choice. Since the very first Browning safe ads nearly 30 years ago we have been unafraid of laying out the facts and details of our safes, much to the dismay of our competition who simply could not match our innovation. If you remember the original "The Competition Hates Our Guts" ads, then you have been around for a while. But the competition is still afraid of head-to-head comparisons with a Browning ProSteel safe.

2.

Q. What is the most important thing to look for to make sure you get a good gun safe?

A. There really are several features you need to be aware of -- but if I had to pick just one it would be "construction." By this I mean how the safe is put together, particularly the door. Having said that, there are many things that are part of a well-constructed safe. For example, the mechanism that includes the bolts and the way they actually lock the door to the safe is critical. So is the way the door frame is built in order to resist prying, and of course the overall strength and massiveness of the materials themselves is key. Each factor contributes to the level of safety you are getting. The difference in security that you get between a bottom-of-the-line safe up to the top end is so wide that you must know what you are looking for. In all the confusion it is important to remember that not all gun safes are really "safes."



Dale Weathers, Browning gun safe product manager, is shown with Browning's patented DPX door storage system.

3.

Q. What do you mean by “not all gun safes are really safes?”

A. Many “gun safes” being sold at hardware chains and large marts are simply metal cabinets masquerading as safes. Don’t expect them to go out of their way to explain the difference. But for your own protection a good starting point is to make sure a safe has the Underwriter’s Laboratory Security Container Rating. This UL rating is the absolute minimum! Your safe MUST have it – and anything less is not going to offer much protection. No matter how the manufacturer “rates” their safes, without the UL rating you shouldn't consider it a viable gun safe. All our safes have this rating, but at Browning that is not enough. Browning uses the UL rating as just a starting point for security, so we exceed this rating with every safe we sell.

4.

Q. We’ve only been talking about forced entry security so far, what about protection from fire?

A. Next to losing your guns to a burglar, the next big concern is losing them to a fire.

The number one most important thing to look for in a fire safe is the thickness of the insulation. The difference between safes in this area is huge. Don’t buy a fire-rated gun safe unless you know exactly how much insulation it has. Browning insulation varies from ½” for safes used in lower risk situations up to 2 ½” of insulation for safes being used in higher risk situations. This is especially important when storing extremely valuable gun collections and other belongings or when the home is somewhat distant from a fire station. There is no gun safe industry standard rating for fire protection. So I think it is important to know three key points before you buy a safe:

1. Make sure the thickness of the insulation matches the protection you need.
2. Look at the interior to make sure there are no gaps in the insulation.
3. Make sure the safe is made by a brand you fully trust.

5.

Q. Browning has been the leader in gun safe improvements for nearly 30 years. What is the next big innovation in gun safe design?

A. Without question the big advances will be in increasing the useful storage capacity of gun safes -- specifically the ease of getting to your guns. Not only are people buying more guns right now but they have also realized that many of their other valuables should be safely locked up. Browning has responded to this trend by introducing our patented DPX Storage System. When we announced this at the SHOT Show it actually stunned the industry with its effectiveness. The DPX System reconfigures the safe interior to allow a row of long guns to be stored on the safe door itself. Along with the rifles and shotguns, there is also room for the storage of handguns and other gear on the back of the door. By moving guns to the door we literally quadrupled the number of guns in your safe that you can get to quickly.