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THE GAZETTE

Return to state background checks results in 8 denials on first day

The New York Times

DENVER — After scrapping its own criminal background checks of gun buyers to use a system the FBI began eight months ago, Colorado resumed its prior efforts.

A triple slaying in June convinced state lawmakers that federal records often do not reflect a gun buyer's complete criminal history. So on Sunday, Colorado resumed checking state and local records for the first time since March. Eight of 76 potential buyers were turned away, including two who had criminal pasts that would not have shown up in FBI records, local officials said.

"I'm glad it's back," Gov. Bill Owens said Monday. "It's something we should have. I just regret that we had to have a tragedy as the proximate cause for my reinstating it."

Before federal gun legislation known as the Brady Bill passed

in 1993 and created a five-day waiting period for gun purchases, 18 states, including Colorado, were checking state and local records for criminal activity that would deny the buyer the right to purchase a firearm.

In the eight months since the instant checks replaced the waiting period, Colorado, New York, Delaware and Missouri abandoned their checking systems.

But unlike the other three states, Colorado reversed course, largely because of Simon Gonzales' purchase of a 9 mm Taurus handgun on June 22. His application failed to show that his estranged wife secured a restraining order against him through a state court, which under federal law would have disqualified him from owning a gun.

Hours after his purchase, Gonzales shot to death his three daughters, ages 7, 8 and 10. Shortly after, he died in a gun battle with the police.