

LOSS CONTROL BULLETIN

Tree Stand Safety

If you're an avid hunter, an elevated tree stand is a great way to take your hunting experience to the next level. An elevated stand allows you to have a better vantage point of what is going on around you, see a wider area of wilderness and spot the game before it spots you. However, with those advantages there are also some serious risks associated with a tree stand. Accidents related to stands are a major safety hazard, especially during deer season. There are several safety precautions that you can take to be able to garner the benefits of a tree stand while avoiding injury.

Before the Hunt

There are several different types of tree stands available for use. Know what type of tree stand you have, to identify the specific precautions that are needed:

- Fixed position stands are secured in one spot on a tree trunk.
- Vertical ladder stands have a ladder that supports the platform.
- Climbing stands allow the hunter to “walk” up a tree trunk to a particular elevation. This is the most popular type of tree stand.
- Permanent stands are installed and left in a tree at all times. Since the stand is being left out in the elements, it could deteriorate. Extra care should be paid to ensure the safety of the stand each time you use it.

Become familiar with your tree stand, and read the manufacturer's instructions and safety warnings. Use a tree stand that is approved by the Treestand Manufacturer's Association (TMA) for your weight and is equipped with all necessary gear. Inspect the stand: look for missing or loose parts and general wear and tear. You should also do this with a newly purchased tree stand. Once you have thoroughly examined your stand, you should practice with it at ground level and gradually move up in elevation. At this time, you should also be practicing with your Full-Body Harness (FBH). While you are practicing, there should be another person around. Often, local conservation departments, shooting ranges or outdoor education centers will have poles specifically designed for you to test your tree stand.

After you have read all the instructions, checked all the equipment and practiced, you are ready to use your tree stand. Find the right size tree for your particular tree stand. The tree should be examined for animal dens and insect nests. Avoid trees that have smooth bark when using climbing stands, especially during wet or icy conditions. Debris should be cleared from around the base of the tree. This will help minimize injury in the event of a fall and will ensure that you have a solid foundation if you are using a ladder stand.

Make sure that you have an emergency signal device with you. This could be a cell phone, whistle, flashlight or walkie-talkie. Remember to always inform a reliable person where you will be hunting, when you are leaving, when you plan to be back and who is going to be with you. Plans and maps are also helpful in the event that there is a mishap.

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During the Hunt

During the hunt, wear your Full-Body Harness at all times. It is not enough to own a harness or practice with one; you must wear it for it to do its job.

While climbing up or down, always utilize the three-point rule. Keep three points of contact with the ladder or tree at all times. This could mean two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand. If you are using a platform stand, you should climb higher than the stand and step down onto it. Be sure to slowly lower your weight onto the platform to ensure the stability of the stand and to keep yourself balanced.

Never ascend or descend from your stand while carrying any type of equipment or when wearing bulky clothing. Instead, utilize a haul line to raise and lower your gear. Your firearm should be unloaded, and broad heads should be covered before raising or lowering a bow or firearm.

In the event of a fall, you should replace the harness with a new one to ensure your safety on your next hunt.

Finding the prize-winning game animal is not worth risking your own life in the process. However, by following these simple safety tips, you can have an enjoyable and successful hunting experience while staying safe at the same time.



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