

FALL ARREST SYSTEMS SAVE LIVES – DON'T CLIMB WITHOUT ONE!

wendy horine August 8, 2017



Statistics show hunting ranks among the safest of outdoor sports, and hunting related injuries have dropped considerably with required hunter education. However, the annual figures don't tell the whole story because it's difficult for game agencies to keep track of the injuries sustained in falls from tree stands. Frequently, treestand accidents don't involve firearms or even archery equipment in the case setting up, moving or taking down a stand. As a result, many treestand accidents aren't included in these statistics.

We hope everyone is excited to get out into the field to enjoy Nebraska's upcoming fall hunting seasons, but it's always important to keep safety in mind. According to the Treestand Manufacturers Association (TMA) and Tree Stand Safety Awareness, two groups who promote the safe use of tree stands and fall arrest systems while hunting, falls from treestands account for 36% of all hunting accidents are the number one cause of serious injury and deaths during deer hunting season in the United States.



A full-body harness is an excellent first step in preventing serious injury, but hunters should be aware that if a fall should occur they are still in serious danger if they hang suspended from their harness for even a short period of time. According to John Louk, executive director of the TMA, 95 percent of all serious treestand-related injuries are the direct result of hunters not wearing a full-body harness. He further states, even though a full-body harness

can prevent many serious injuries, 10% of those who fell while wearing one still suffered serious after effects because they were not able self-rescue.

Treestand hunters should ALWAYS use a fall arrest system rated for your personal weight. Ropes or other homemade devices are dangerous and should NEVER be used as a substitute for a fall arrest system. The few extra minutes it takes to use a fall arrest system could save your life. The fall arrest system harness should fit snugly over your hunting clothes. Jackets and coats can be worn over top of the harness. It may be cool when you climb into your stand before sunrise, but as the day warms you probably will too. Don't risk a fall by removing the harness so you can remove your outer layers. By wearing your jacket or coat over top of the harness, you can easily remove and stay safely attached.



You should attach yourself to the tree and remain attached from the time you leave the ground until the time you are back on the ground after your hunt. When climbing, be sure to remember the “3 points of contact” rule – two hands plus two feet equal four potential points of contact, and any three of them should be in contact with your ladder or climbing steps at all times. The lifeline (tether) from your fall arrest system to the tree should be attached to the tree just above your head with just enough slack to allow you to comfortably sit in your stand (if there is a seat) without feeling it tug. Too much slack in the life line

may result in an extremely hard jolt if a fall occurs and can leave you hanging too low to be able to right yourself back into your stand

Never climb into our out of your stand carrying your equipment. Always use a haul line. Securely tie the line around your equipment, climb into your stand unencumbered by your equipment, then pull your equipment up to you using the line. Reverse the order at the end of your hunt – equipment goes to the ground first, then you climb



down.



Before using a treestand itself, check for metal fatigue on all joints and welds, check metal stands for rust and wood stands for rot, check for missing bolts and nuts, and look for deterioration due to age or poor storage condition. Nylon straps can rot and weaken and are often subject damage from mice and other small animals chewing on them.

Although archery hunters are not required to wear the distinctive hunter orange during the early season, they are required to wear it if they continue to archery hunt during the November firearm season and the January deer season. It's always a good idea to wear hunter orange as a precaution in the field to make you more visible to other hunters, and it's been proven to save lives.

Hunters need to know their equipment and how to use it BEFORE going into the field, and keep safety at the forefront. Whether you're heading out to your favorite treestand with your bow to wait for that big buck, or just taking an evening stroll with your shotgun and your favorite hunting dog in the back pasture to bag a few doves, ALWAYS tell someone where you're going and when you plan to return. We all get excited come

hunting season and we can't wait to get into the field, but never be in such a rush that safety is overlooked. We want everyone to be able to enjoy hunting and all that comes with it for many years to come.

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