Tree Stand Safety!

As the deer hunting season gets underway, it is important to remember some tree stand safety tips.

Tree stands can be dangerous if they are used incorrectly or carelessly. One in three hunting injuries involves a tree stand. Falls from tree stands can be caused by a variety of factors, including a weakness in the stand’s structure and incorrect installation. Hunters also may fall asleep while on their stands. Injuries can occur from accidental firing of a loaded firearm while the hunter is climbing to the stand. To help prevent these accidents, follow these safety precautions:

- Never carry equipment with you while climbing. Use a haul line to raise or lower your gear. Make sure guns are unloaded and broadheads are covered prior to raising or lowering firearms or bows with a haul line.

- Most accidents occur when hunters are climbing up or down a tree; always use a climbing belt. Always use a safety belt or harness when hunting from elevated tree stands. Don’t use a rope as a safety harness.

- Check permanent tree stands every year before hunting from them, and replace any worn or weak lumber.

- Read, understand and follow the factory recommended practices and procedures when installing commercial stands. Inspect portable stands for loose nuts and bolts each time they are used.

- Choose only healthy, living trees when using climbing devices. Rough-barked trees such as oak are best. Do not use a tree that is rotten or has dead limbs.

- Climb higher than the stand platform and step down onto it. Climbing up onto it can dislodge it.

- Wear boots with non-skid soles, because steps or platforms can be slippery in rain, sleet or snow.

- Tell a dependable person where you’re hunting and when you plan on returning. Map your whereabouts and leave a note at camp, at home or in your car so that you can be found.
• Don’t fall asleep. This is a common cause of accidents. If you get drowsy, move your arms rapidly until you feel alert.

• Never wear a ring in any climbing situation. Rings can catch on tree limbs and equipment.
• As a precautionary measure, remove all logs, upturned and cutoff saplings, rocks and other obstructions on the ground below the tree stand.

• Use updated equipment. When used properly, newer tree stand equipment is solid, safe and secure. Older models of safety belts offer some protection, but newer safety harnesses offer more protection.

• Carry a whistle to call for help and carry a first aid kit, flashlight and cell phone in a pack.