



**U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS CENTER**

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# **READY** **...OR NOT?**

## **Enjoying hunting season safely**

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What was supposed to be a great weekend hunting with friends came to an abrupt halt when the Soldier fell out of a deer stand and broke his arm. Confident of his skills to ascend to the platform, the Soldier decided against using a safety harness. That decision resulted in the group calling off the hunt and spending much of the day in a hospital emergency room.

Fortunately, no one in the group suffered serious injury. But the fall could have inadvertently set off a chain of events that included the Soldier's rifle firing and gravely wounding, if not killing, one of his friends.

According to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, tree stand incidents account for the majority, about 80 percent, of all hunting accidents. Overall, the injury rate for hunters is relatively small, approximately 50 per 100,000 participants. There are ways to make hunting even safer, however.

To prevent tree stand mishaps, the International Hunter Education Association recommends hunters wear tree stand restraints or harnesses at all times until they're safely back on the ground. Additionally, hunters should plan for instances where they might fall, get caught by the restraint system and find themselves hanging in the air.

The IHEA also advises hunters to never hunt alone. Hunting with a partner increases the chance of survival in the event of injury or unexpectedly getting lost in unfamiliar terrain. Likewise, hunters should advise family and friends of their location to provide first responders a point of reference in case of emergency.

Standard throughout much of the United States, hunters are required and/or highly encouraged to wear hunter orange vests and hats to increase their visibility in the brush. Fatalities could result if hunters mistake an individual for game or do not check the foreground or background before firing. A hunter orange vest and hat does much to mitigate this risk, but hunters must nonetheless adhere to other safety precautions, such as not pointing the muzzle in an unsafe direction or ignoring proper handling procedures for crossing fences, obstacles or difficult terrain.

Other tips include carrying a flashlight, glow stick and whistle during hunting excursions. These devices not only increase visibility during the evening hours, but also provide a means to signal for help or ward off unwanted predators.

For more information on seasonal safety, visit <https://safety.army.mil>.