

SAFETY: Always hunt with a plan and let others know

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2. A safety strap should be attached to the tree to prevent you from falling more than 12 inches.

3. Always inspect the safety harness for signs of wear or damage before each use.

4. Follow all manufacturers' instructions for use of a safety harness and stand.

5. Follow the three-point rule of treestand safety. Always have three points of contact to the steps or ladder before moving. This could be two arms and one leg holding and stepping on the ladder or one arm and two legs in contact with the ladder before moving. Be cautious that rain, frost, ice or snow can cause steps to become extremely slippery. Check the security of the step before placing your weight on it.

6. Always hunt with a plan and, if possible, a buddy. Before you leave home, let others know your exact hunting location, when you plan to return and who is with you.

7. Always carry emergency signal devices such as a cell phone, walkie-talkie, whistle, signal flare, PLD (personal locator device) and flashlight at all times and within reach even while you are suspended in your fall-arrest system. Watch for changing weather conditions. In the event of an incident, remain calm and seek help immediately.

8. Always select the proper tree for use with your treestand. Select a live, straight tree that fits within the size limits recommended in your treestand's instructions. Do not climb or place a treestand against a leaning tree.

9. Never leave a treestand installed for more than two weeks since damage could result from changing weather



Always use a full-body harness and keep the safety line attached at all times when climbing up or down the tree.

conditions and/or from other factors not obvious with a visual inspection.

10. Always use a haul line to pull up your gear and unloaded firearm or bow to your treestand once you have reached your desired hunting height. Never climb with anything in your hands or on your back. Prior to descending, lower your equipment on the opposite side of the tree.

11. Always know your physical limitations. Don't take chances. Do not climb when impaired by drugs, alcohol or if you're sick or unrested. If you start thinking about how high you are, stop climbing.

Alabama hunters also had several firearms-related accidents during the 2018-2019 season with three fatalities and two non-fatal incidents.

Two of the fatalities were self-inflicted. One was in a shooting house when the accident happened. The other

occurred when the hunter fell, and his handgun discharged. One fatality occurred when a hunter was mistaken for game.

One of the two non-fatal accidents happened during a dove-hunting outing. The shooter covered another hunter while swinging on a dove. Failure to check beyond the target, a deer, resulted in the second non-fatal accident.

When I write about having a safe and enjoyable hunting season, I always list the 10 commandments of firearms safety:

1. Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.

2. Control the muzzle of your firearm. Keep the barrel pointed in a safe direction; never point a firearm at anything that you do not wish to shoot and insist that your shooting and hunting companions do the same.

3. Be sure of your target and beyond. Positively identify your target before you fire, and make sure there are no people, livestock, roads or buildings beyond the target.

4. Never shoot at water or a hard, flat surface. A ricocheting bullet cannot be controlled.

5. Don't use a scope for target identification; use binoculars.

6. Never climb a tree, cross a fence or jump a ditch with a loaded firearm.

7. Store guns and ammunition separately. Store firearms under lock and key, and use a gun case to transport firearms.

8. Make sure your barrel and action are clear of all obstructions.

9. Unload firearms when not in use. Never take someone else's word that a firearm is unloaded. Check yourself.

10. Avoid drugs and alcohol when hunting or shooting.

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