



STATE SAFETY OFFICE
HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
330 OLD NISKAYUNA ROAD
LATHAM, NEW YORK 12110



SAFETY MESSAGE 20-11

November is Hunter Safety

Many of our Soldiers will be taking to the woods this month to take part in this year's hunting season. While our Soldiers should be well trained in weapon safety there can be other hazardous they should be prepared for. With the following safety tips, we can help ensure that they will not become another lost Soldier.

No one expects to go out to their hunting lease and get injured, but like most any outdoor activity, there is the risk of injury. With firearms involved the injury may be more serious. Every year the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) compiles a hunting accident incident report. The most prevalent "major factors" cited for these accidents include the following: "Failure to identify target, Victim out of site of the shooter, Firearm fell from insecure rest, Failure to use safety belt, Victim moved into line of fire, Shooter swinging on game, Failure to check beyond target, Careless handling of firearm."

IHEA recommends hunters and shooters follow four basic rules of firearms safety, known as the TABK acronym.

T - Treat every firearm as if it were loaded.

A - Always point the firearm in a safe direction.

B - Be sure of your target and what is beyond your target.

K - Keep your finger out of the trigger guard and off the trigger until ready to shoot.

How Can Hunters Reduce Risks?

Hunting accidents of all types happen every year. Most hunting accident victims are responsible hunters who have over 10 years' experience. Since DEC's Hunter Education Program was first introduced in New York State in 1949, the hunting-related incidents has declined significantly. The 2019 hunting season in New York had the fewest hunting-related shooting incidents (HRSIs) and was the safest hunting season on record.

Of the 12 HRSIs that occurred last years:

- 7 two-party firearm incidents with 1 fatality
- 5 self-inflicted with no fatalities

What can you do to increase safety while hunting?

1. Get proper education

- Read, take a hunter safety education course, watch hunter education videos, take an on-line course. A variety of resources exist. Taking a class can be interesting and rewarding, regardless of how long you have been hunting. New York now offers an online hunter safety course at <https://www.hunter-ed.com/newyork/>. An In person class registration can be found at https://register-ed.com/programs/new_york/165.

2. Practice the skills needed

- It's one thing to be book smart and another to put it into play. Some students take a course, but then don't touch a firearm until opening day. Shooting arrows and firearms can be done in a number of safe, supportive places.

3. Follow state guidelines for wearing hunter orange

- This universal hunter safety color will dramatically reduce your chance of being mistaken for game. Each state has its own guidelines, which can be viewed on <https://www.ihea-usa.org> under "Hunter Education".

4. Don't take deer stand safety requirements for granted

- Follow the instructions on deer stand equipment and check for faulty equipment.

5. Establish a method for locating and communicating with other members of your hunting party

- Have a map that outlines where each member will be hunting. Have an emergency plan in place.

6. Avoid consumption of drugs and alcohol

- Judgement, agility, and balance are all reduced by alcohol consumption. In addition alcohol thins the blood stream and can hasten the onset of hypothermia.

7. Minimize risk exposure by purchasing hunting lease liability insurance

- It's not worth risking your assets and financial security due to an unforeseen accident.

8. Be weather wise

- Keep an eye on current and predicted weather conditions. In this area, weather can change very quickly. Know the signs for approaching storms or changing weather conditions. Avoid bare ridge tops, exposed places, lone trees, streams, and rocks during lightning storms. Find shelter in a densely forested area at a lower elevation.

More information is available at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/49506.html>.

To find previously published Safety Messages go to our NYARNG Safety Website:

<http://dmna.ny.gov/safety/>

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