

Treestand Safety Tips

Many Southeastern states now report treestand accidents as the major cause of hunting related injuries. The proper use of treestand equipment will help to prevent these injuries or even death.

Before the hunt

Know your equipment.

- Read and understand the manufacturer's instructions and warnings before you use your Treestand and Full-Body Harness (FBH).
- Check stands (including straps and chains) every season and also before each use for signs of wear, fatigue, cracks, loose or missing nuts or bolts and replace as necessary.
- Practice at ground level with your treestand and FBH with another person present before the hunt.
- Learn how to properly use your FBH with a suspension release device.

Note: Waist belts or upper-body-only designs of safety harnesses should never be used and can cause death or serious injury.

Select the right tree for your stand

- Select a healthy, straight tree that is the right size for your treestand.
- Check the tree for insect nests or animal dens.
- Avoid using climbing stands on smooth barked trees, especially during icy or wet conditions.
- Clear debris from the base of the tree to minimize injury from a fall and to ensure a safe base if using a ladder stand.

Select an alternate ground blind

- Be prepared for changing weather conditions, such as rain, lightning, and high wind that might make it unsafe to hunt from an elevated stand.
- Know your limitations. If you feel sleepy or unsure about the climb, a ground blind will provide you a safe alternative hunting option.

Have a hunt plan

- Let a reliable person know where you'll be, when you will return and who's with you. Plans and maps make it easier for others to find you in the event of a mishap.



photo: USFWS / Matt Conner

Plan for the Hunt and Hunt with a Plan!

During the hunt

Wear a FBH!

- Simply owning a FBH does not make you safe, you must take it out of your pack and wear it.
- Make sure your FBH is attached to the tree as soon as you begin to climb using climbing stands and/or climbing aids.
- In the case of ladder stands, attach the FBH before securing the platform to the tree or stepping onto it.

Wear a FBH at all times while using any elevated stand.

Don't take chances

- When climbing a ladder, keep three points of contact with the ladder at all times. Both hands and a foot or both of your feet and one hand should be used to support your body weight when using a ladder.
- When using a platform stand, climb higher than the stand and then step down onto the platform. Slowly put your weight onto your stand to be sure of your balance.
- Use boots with non-slip soles to avoid slipping, especially in wet weather.
- Never carry equipment when climbing. Use a haul line to raise and lower equipment.

In the stand

Properly adjust your FBH

- Whether standing or sitting, keep the tether line distance (between you and the tree) as short as possible with no slack in the tether while in the seated position. This will minimize the distance in case of a fall

Use a haul line

- Always raise and lower your firearm, bow or other equipment with a haul line.

- Make sure firearms are unloaded before attaching to a haul line and don't attach the haul line near the trigger or trigger guard.

- Make sure broadheads are covered prior to raising or lowering a bow with a haul line.

If you fall, stay calm

- By planning ahead, you can avoid additional problems.

- Have emergency equipment such as a knife, cell phone, flashlight, and/or whistle on your person.

Practice the 3 R's: recover, relief and rescue

- Attempt to recover and return to your stand. If this is not possible, exercise your legs by pushing against the tree, using another form of motion or your suspension relief device until help arrives.
- Don't take chances.
- Call for help immediately.

For more information on treestand safety and a list of products that have been independently tested and certified go to:

- National Bowhunter Education Foundation: www.nbef.org or www.projectstand.net
- International Hunter Education Association: www.ihea.com
- Treestand Manufacturers Association: tmastands.com

