

# **IDNR reminds hunters to make safety a priority**

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*Most hunting incidents involve tree stands*

**SPRINGFIELD** – Hunters in Illinois are being reminded to make safety a top priority, especially during the state’s busiest hunting seasons this fall.

“There is no better place to participate in and celebrate our hunting heritage than right here in Illinois during the fall,” said Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Director Wayne Rosenthal. “No matter the hunting seasons, we want hunters to enjoy their time in the field, and to be safe while doing so.”

The IDNR Office of Law Enforcement, which administers the state’s Hunter Safety Education Program, has investigated 10 hunting incidents so far during 2016, eight of which involved hunters falling from elevated tree stands or falling while climbing into or out of tree stands.

In 2015, there were 25 hunting incidents reported in all hunting seasons in Illinois. Among the hunting incidents reported last year, 15 involved tree stands.

The IDNR reminds hunters using tree stands to use a Fall Arrest System (FAS) safety harness. Nationally, more than 80 percent of reported tree stand incidents involve hunters who were not using a fall restraint system.

Hunters should also check the harness, straps, ladder and other equipment before use to make sure they are in working order; be aware of weather conditions that could make stands and steps slippery; and, have within reach a mobile phone to call for help, if needed. Hunters can review tree stand safety online at <http://www.huntercourse.com/treestandssafety/>

Safety educators and IDNR Conservation Police also remind everyone hunting with a firearm to:

- Treat every firearm as if it is loaded, and never assume a firearm is unloaded;
- Always point a firearm in a safe direction;
- Be sure of the target, and make sure there are no other hunters, homes, buildings, vehicles or other animals beyond the target;
- Keep their finger out of the trigger guard and off the trigger until they are ready to shoot.

Illinois' most popular hunting season, the seven-day firearm deer season, begins on Friday through Sunday, Nov. 18-20, and will conclude on Thursday through Sunday, Dec. 1-4.

The Illinois Firearm Deer Season legal hunting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Hunters who take a deer during the firearm season in most Illinois counties must register the deer they harvest online, or through a toll-free phone check-in system. The online deer registration is available through this link: <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting/Pages/HarvestReporting.aspx>

The toll-free phone deer registration line is 1-866-IL-CHECK (1-866-452-4325). Hunters registering deer through the online or phone systems must do so by 10 p.m. on the day they take the deer.

In a number of northern Illinois counties where chronic wasting disease (CWD) has been detected in deer, hunters are required to register all deer harvested during firearm season by taking them to a check station (listed below) between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Biologists will be present to take CWD samples for testing at the time of registration. Testing is voluntary, but all hunters with adult deer are encouraged to participate. The counties where hunters are required to check in their deer at check stations are:

**Boone:** Boone Co. Fairgrounds, 1/2 mi. north of Rt. 76 and Business Rt. 20, Belvidere



**DeKalb:** Shabbona Lake State Park, 4201 Shabbona Grove Rd., Shabbona

**Grundy:** Gebhard Woods State Park, 401 Ottawa Street, Morris

**Jo Daviess:** Elizabeth Community Building, 210 N. West St., Elizabeth, IL, 1/2 mi. west of business district on Hwy. 20, next to the Highland C.C. Elizabeth campus

**Kane:** Use Boone, DeKalb, Kendall, or McHenry check station

**Kankakee:** Kankakee River State Park Visitor Center, 4 mi. northwest of Bourbonnais at 5214 W. State Rt. 102

**Kendall:** Silver Springs State Fish and Wildlife Area, 4.5 mi. west of Yorkville at 13608 Fox Road

**LaSalle:** Buffalo Rock State Park, 3 mi. west of Ottawa on Dee Bennett Road

**Livingston:** Pontiac Sportsman's Club, northwest of Livingston Co. Fairgrounds at 18663 4-H Park Road, Pontiac

**McHenry:** Moraine Hills State Park McHenry Dam Day Use Area, east of McHenry on River Rd., 2.2 mi. south of Rt. 120

**Ogle:** Castle Rock State Park, Rt. 2, 3 mi. south of Oregon, IL

**Stephenson:** County Fairgrounds, 1 mi. east of Rt. 26 and Fairgrounds Rd., Freeport

**Will:** Des Plaines Game Propagation Center, east of I-55 at 30550 S. Boathouse Road, Wilmington

**Winnebago:** Rock Cut State Park, 6425 Hart Rd., Loves Park, 0.9 mi. east of N. Perryville Rd. on Hart Rd.

Hunters participating in the CWD sampling can check the status of their deer (listed by phone number) through the IDNR website. Hunters who provide samples from deer that test positive are notified by the IDNR. For more information on CWD in Illinois, check the website at [www.dnr.illinois.gov/programs/CWD](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/programs/CWD).

For a detailed information sheet on firearm deer hunting in counties with check stations for chronic wasting disease sampling, go to the IDNR website at: <https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/news/Documents/DeerCheckCWDCounties2016.pdf>

In addition to the seven-day Illinois Firearm Deer Season, other deer hunting seasons in the state include the three-day Muzzleloader-only Deer Season on Dec. 9-11, and the seven-day split Late-Winter Firearm Antlerless-only Deer Season and Special CWD Deer Season (in select counties) on Dec. 29, 2016-Jan. 1, 2017 and January 13-15, 2017. The Illinois Archery Deer Season, which opened on Oct. 1, is open through Jan. 15, 2017 (except closed in counties open to Firearm Deer Season on Nov. 18-20 and Dec. 1-4).

For more information on Illinois deer hunting regulations: [www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting/deer](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting/deer).