



Hunters in Illinois Encouraged to Think Safety First

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SPRINGFIELD – Hunters in Illinois should think safety before, during and after their time in the field this fall and winter as waterfowl, upland game, furbearer, and firearm and archery deer seasons provide ample opportunity to enjoy time in the outdoors in Illinois.

“We want to encourage hunters to make safety their first priority as they head out to enjoy what we hope will be a successful hunting season for everyone,” said Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Director Colleen Callahan. “Illinois’ hunting heritage is best celebrated by making sure hunters can spend their time experiencing the bounty nature provides for us and returning home safely to plan for their next hunting adventure.”

The IDNR Office of Law Enforcement, which administers the state’s Hunter Safety Education Program, has investigated seven hunting incidents so far during 2020. In 2019, there were 20 hunting incidents reported in all hunting seasons in Illinois. Among the hunting incidents reported last year, 10 involved hunters using elevated tree stands.

“Many mishaps involving elevated tree stands are preventable, and that’s why we remind hunters to use a Fall Arrest System (FAS) safety harness, no matter the type of elevated stand they are using,” said Jeff Hopkins, IDNR Safety Education administrator.

When utilizing a tree stand, hunters should check that their stand is installed properly. Hunters should check the harness and straps and replace worn straps if needed – and check the ladder and other equipment before they hunt to make sure they are in working order. Hunters also need to be mindful of weather conditions that could make stands and steps slippery, and they should have a cellphone within easy reach to call for help, if needed. Hunters can review tree stand safety online at <http://www.huntercourse.com/treestandsafety/>

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; and
- Keep their finger out of the trigger guard and off the trigger until they are ready to shoot.

Other safety considerations include ensuring heating sources are properly ventilated in hunting cabins and boats, wearing appropriate, high visibility clothing while hunting (including blaze orange or blaze pink when required), and being familiar with the area being hunted.

Each year, Illinois' busiest hunting season is the seven-day firearm deer season. Dates for the firearm season this year are Friday through Sunday, Nov. 20-22 and Thursday through Sunday, Dec. 3-6.

The Illinois Archery Deer Season opened Oct. 1 and continues through Jan. 17, 2021. Archery deer season is closed during the firearm deer weekends except in those counties where firearm deer hunting is not permitted.

For more details on Illinois deer, waterfowl, upland game, furbearer and other hunting seasons this fall and winter, check the ***Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations*** available on the IDNR website at <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/Pages/HuntTrapDigest.aspx>.