

IDNR Offers Reminders For Safe Hunting Practices During Busy Fall Seasons

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SPRINGFIELD – Autumn is prime time for hunting in Illinois, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) reminds hunters that whether they are in search of deer, ducks, geese, furbearers, upland species or other game this fall, they need to focus on safe hunting practices.

“Illinois’ hunting heritage is second to none, and we encourage hunters to make safety their first priority as they enjoy time in the field during our busy fall seasons and throughout the year,” said IDNR Director Colleen Callahan.

The IDNR Office of Law Enforcement, which administers the state's Hunter Safety Education Program, investigated 31 reported hunting incidents last year. Five of those incidents resulted in fatalities. Among the hunting incidents last year, 14 involved elevated tree stands. There have been six reported hunting-related incidents so far in 2021.

“Many of the hunting incidents our Conservation Police Officers investigate are preventable if safety practices are followed,” said Timothy Tyler, director of the IDNR Office of Law Enforcement. “When hunting from a tree stand, hunters should always check that their stand is installed properly, and they should use a Fall Arrest System full body safety harness when in the stand.”

Other safety recommendations related to tree stands include checking the harness and straps and replacing worn straps; checking the ladder and other equipment before use to make sure they are in working order; and, being aware of weather conditions that could make steps and stands slippery. More tree stand safety information is available online at <http://www.huntercourse.com/treestandsafety/>.

IDNR safety educators and Conservation Police also remind firearm hunters to:

- Watch the muzzle of their firearm and keep it pointed in a safe direction;
- Treat every firearm as if it is loaded and never assume a firearm is unloaded;
- Be sure of the target and what is in front of it and behind it;
- Keep fingers outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot;
- Check the barrel and ammunition to make sure they are clear of obstructions, and carry only the proper ammunition for the firearm being used;
- Unload firearms when not in use;
- Never run, jump or climb with a loaded firearm – always unload a firearm before climbing a fence or tree;
- Store firearms and ammunition separately and safely.

Among other safety considerations, hunters are reminded to ensure heating sources are ventilated properly when in hunting cabins and boats; wearing appropriate, high visibility clothing while hunting; and, being familiar with the area being hunted.

Illinois' busiest hunting season, the seven-day firearm deer season, begins Friday through Sunday, Nov. 19-21, 2021, and will conclude Thursday through Sunday, Dec. 2-5, 2021.

The Illinois Archery Deer Season opened Oct. 1, 2021, and continues through Jan. 17, 2022. 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 season dates and regulations this fall and winter, check the ***Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations 2021-2022*** at <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/Pages/HuntTrapDigest.aspx>