

**Harness up before you climb your tree stand**

As a hunter you probably think of yourself as being a "survivor." You know about being prepared for inclement weather, how to start an emergency fire, taking along a couple high protein bars in your backpack and having an emergency signaling device. These are all simple, yet purposeful actions and items that can come in handy if you need to survive an emergency afield.

However, the one action many hunters fail to do to help themselves survive can prove deadly. That is, when hunting from an elevated position they are not attached to the tree from the time they leave the ground until they get back down. The good news is more and more hunters are using a fall-arrest device (full body harness).

However, many still use them incorrectly.

For example, it is incorrect to put the harness on after you are in your stand. If you do that, you have already exposed yourself to one of the highest times of risk. That is, when you climbed up and into your stand. The correct method is to attach yourself to the tree before you climb up, during your sit, and as you climb down. Always remain attached to the tree from the time you leave the ground until you get back down.

Simple actions can be profound when your life depends on them. The simple act of letting someone know where you are going and when to expect you home can prove to be the difference between life and death. While elevated stand injuries may be the most common form of injury to hunters, other events such as a heart attack or a sprained ankle may incapacitate you. Knowing your location and when you are expected to return can mean the difference in quickly getting you the medical help needed or having to spend the night hurt, incapacitated and alone in the woods.

When preparing for any type of emergency, a critical evaluation of yourself and your limitations is necessary. Be realistic in your planning and be aware of your physical condition. As the hunting population becomes more chronologically challenged, so is our ability to use elevated stands. Commercially manufactured ground blinds have evolved and are a safe alternative to climbing into a tree stand.

Elder hunters aren't the only ones who may consider using a ground blind. Think about frosty mornings when ladder rungs are slick or maybe you have taken sinus medication and are simply too drowsy to climb. Give yourself a free pass on getting up in that tree stand.

When you and your buddies install stands prior to hunting season, scout for areas where setting a portable ground blind might be a good option. Give yourself permission NOT TO CLIMB!

Be a survivor. Educate

yourself, your family and your hunting buddies about safe hunting from elevated stands.

Be prepared this hunting season.

- Provided to The Archery Wire by Marilyn Bentz, Executive Director, National Bowhunter Education Foundation

For more information on treestand safety, contact the National Bowhunter Education Foundation, P.O. Box 2934, Rapid City, SD 57709 or 605-716-0596, email: info@nbef.org <http://www.nbef.org>

**Bow Season!** *Jacob brought down this 9 point buck October 2, 2016 in Nolan County. Photo Courtesy of McWhorter's Live Oak Lodge.*

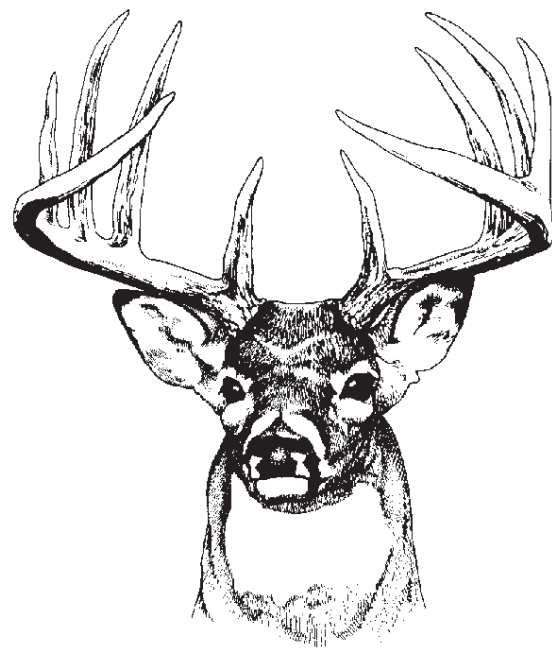


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