Tree Stand Injuries



One of the most common deer hunting practices is the use of an elevated hunting stand. The days of walking in the woods and sitting against a tree along a well traveled deer trail, has become much less common due to the use of elevated tree stands. From basic ladder stands to elaborate "condo" stands the use of tree stands is likely the choice of most deer hunters.

While tree stands do provide a distinct advantage for deer hunters, there are many hazards that accompany this type of hunting. Of the numerous tree stand occurrences reported to Outdoor Underwriters, 27 of the most serious tree stand incidents were analyzed. (The liability basis was not reviewed, just the injuries that occur from the use of tree stands and raised platforms).

Not surprisingly, 25 of the 27 hunters were not utilizing a safety harness. The two hunters that were wearing a safety harness were injured before they had secured themselves to the tree. The fall injuries that were recorded ranged from as little as 6 feet and as high as 30 feet. Serious injuries can occur from falls of only 6-8 feet.

Ten of the 27 incidents reported occurred while securing a stand to a tree. Thus, one of the highest risk activities is not just hunting, it is the act of moving, maintaining or installing the stand.

Types Of Tree Stands

Box and/or shooting houses - 10 box/shooting house incidents occured. 4 of the 10 injuries occured while entering & exiting the stand at or near the entranceway door.

Ladder stands - 9 ladder stand incidents occured. 5 of these instances occurred while securing the stand to the tree or loosening the nylon strap that holds the stand to the tree.

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Nylon or rope secured sitting platforms - 7 injuries occured from the use of stands and seats that use cables/ropes/nylon to secure the seat to the tree. 5 of the 7 injuries occurred due to a strap breaking, age, or being improperly secured.

Portable climber - One portable stand collapsed.

Out of the 27 incidents reviewed, 17 of these incidents occurred while hunting.

Hunting incidents included:

- 7 - Mechanical issues with the stand
- 4 - While exiting and entering the stand
- 3 - While shooting
- 3 - Other

Safety

When using box stands & ladder stands the most crucial point is entering or exiting the stand. Handrails, door swing, and ladder incline should all be taken into consideration when constructing a stand.

Moving a box stand is extremely dangerous. Top heavy weight, rough terrain, and faulty construction /design can cause serious injuries. Before moving a stand, the area should be cleared and the move should be planned with proper support ropes.

While using a portable stand a safety harness should be used at all times (climbing, hunting, and descending).

Any stand secured to the tree with ropes or nylon straps should have an additional safety strap secured to the tree. When changing out a security strap the stand should be secured with an additional temporary rope. A safety harness should always be secured to the tree while undoing and/or replacing ropes .

Ed Wilson, PhD co-founded Outdoor Underwriters Inc. in 2008. As vice president and a certified forester he manages the operations for all aspects of their forestry related insurance products. For more info visit: www.outdoorund.com