

# HUNTING SAFETY STATISTICS

## 2023



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

	2021	2022	2023	5yr avg.
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12*</b>	<b>12.8</b>
Fatal	1	1	2	1.6
Non-fatal	8	8	10	11.2
Self-Inflicted	2	5	6	6.2
Two-Party	7	4	6	6.6
* One incident was not associated with legal hunting.				
<b>Big Game</b>				
Bear	0	0	0	0
Deer	4	5	9	7
<b>Turkey</b>				
Spring	1	1	0	0.8
Fall	0	0	0	0
<b>Small Game</b>				
Rabbit	0	0	2	0.6
Squirrel	1	0	0	1
Upland Bird	2	0	0	0.8
Raccoon	0	0	0	0
Fox/Coyote	1	1	1	1
Waterfowl	0	1	0	1.4
Other	0	1	0	0.2
<b>Firearm Type</b>				
Shotgun	5	3	3	5.8
Rifle	4	5	6	4.6
Handgun	0	0	0	0
Muzzleloader	0	0	3	1.4
Crossbow	0	1	0	0.6
Bow	0	0	0	0
Air Gun	0	0	0	0.2

<b>Hunting-Related Shooting Incidents 2014-2023</b>			
Year	Big Game	Small Game/Other	Total
2014	9	13	22
2015	13	10	23
2016	8	5	13
2017	6	13	19
2018	8	5	13
2019	7	5	12
2020	10	12	22
2021	4	5	9
2022	5	4	9
2023	9	3	12
<b>10-year Average</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>15.4</b>

## All incidents were preventable if safe hunting practices had been followed.

The rate of hunting-related shooting incidents (HRSI) in 2023 was below the 10-year average but unfortunately included two fatalities. These incidents could have been prevented if the safe hunting practices taught in every hunter education course, both online and in-person, were followed.

One fatality involved a hunter using a rope to pull a loaded firearm into a ladder stand. Hunters are reminded to never tie a haul line through the trigger guard, never pull a loaded firearm or crossbow up into a stand, and the barrel of the firearm should always be pointed down while hauling.

The second fatality occurred when two hunters were dragging a deer out of the woods when a firearm being carried by one hunter accidentally discharged and hit the other hunter. After successfully harvesting a deer, all firearms should be unloaded and have the safety engaged before dragging.

Of the twelve HRSIs that occurred in 2023, six were self-inflicted and six were two-party firearm incidents. None of the shooters were certified through the online hunter education course. The average age of the shooters involved in an HRSI was 47. Their years of hunting experience ranged from 4 to 60, with ten of the twelve shooters having more than 15 years of hunting experience.

Despite these incidents, hunting is safe and getting safer. DEC and the volunteer Hunter Education Program instructors would like to remind all hunters to always be safe and prepared while afield.

Please note that the 2023 data are compiled from preliminary reports and are NOT final. Final investigation reports take months in some cases.

This report includes only hunting-related shooting incidents involving firearms, bows, or crossbows. It does not include all incidents and fatalities that occurred while hunting (such as heart attacks).

## The Stories behind the Statistics: Hunting-Related Shooting Incidents 2023

Preliminary descriptions of incidents as of 1/16/2024. Some incidents involve a shooter who was participating in an illegal act. Fatalities are listed in red.

### SMALL GAME & NONGAME

**01/07** - Oneida. While readjusting their position in a tree stand, a coyote hunter's rifle slipped and unintentionally discharged, striking them in the abdomen. Age 68. Hunting experience: 60 yrs. Victim orange: No. Violations noted: No.

**02/18** - Columbia. While rabbit hunting, the shooter discharged one round of a game load at a rabbit, and a single projectile struck a hunting partner in the eye. Age 47. Hunting experience: 30 yrs. Victim orange: Yes. Violations noted: No.

**06/07\*** - Erie. Shooter discharged one round at a rabbit eating their garden crop. A fragment from the round struck a family member in the leg. Age 43. Hunting experience: 30 yrs. Victim orange: No. Violations noted: No. \* This incident was not associated with legal hunting.

### BIG GAME HUNTING

**10/20** – Essex. Shooter discharged one round from a muzzleloader at a deer and struck a hunting partner in the leg. Age 31. Hunting experience: 18 yrs. Victim orange: No. Violations noted: Yes.

**11/03** – Jefferson. Shooter and hunting partner were dragging a deer from the woods when the shooter's rifle caught in the brush and unintentionally discharged, striking the hunting partner in the abdomen at close range. Age 34. Hunting experience: 4 yrs. Victim orange: Yes. Violations noted: Yes.

**11/18** – Wayne. Shooter and hunting partner were dragging a deer from the field when the shooter's shotgun unintentionally discharged, striking the hunting partner in the chest at close range. Age 40. Hunting experience: 24 yrs. Victim orange: Yes. Violations noted: No.

**11/18** – Steuben. Hunter shot at and hit a deer. When they tried to shoot it a second time, the shotgun barrel exploded due to a probable barrel obstruction. Age 30. Hunting experience: 16 yrs. Victim orange: Yes. Violations noted: No.

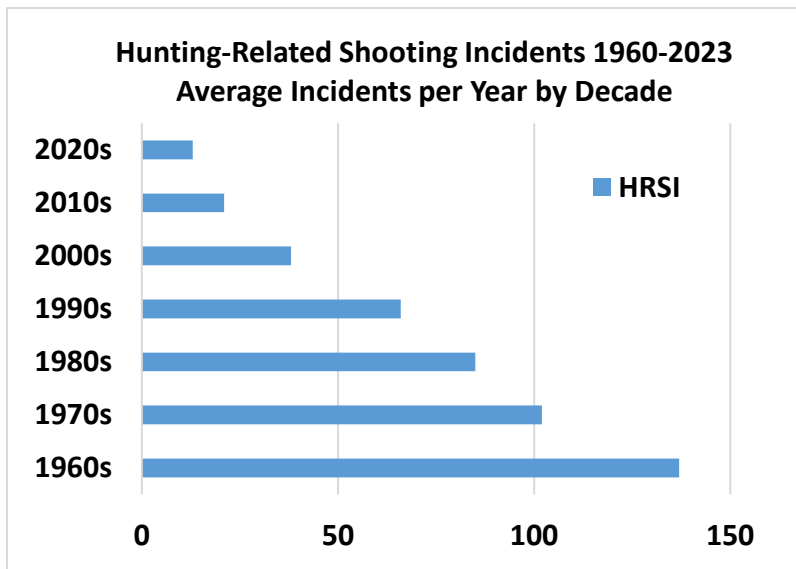
**11/19** – Chemung. Victim's hunting partner left a rifle leaning against a vehicle, which fell over and discharged, striking the victim in the left forearm. Age 29. Hunting experience: 5 yrs. Victim orange: Yes. Violations noted: Yes.

**11/19** – Chenango. Victim was pulling a loaded firearm up into a tower stand when it unintentionally discharged striking their chest. Age 57. Hunting experience: 29 yrs. Victim orange: No. Violations noted: No.

**11/24** – Albany. While exiting their tree stand, the hunter unintentionally discharged one round from their firearm and struck their left foot. Age 68. Hunting experience: 20 yrs. Victim orange: Yes. Violations noted: No.

**12/16** – Schoharie. Victim unintentionally shot themselves in the leg while swinging their firearm forward. Age 48. Hunting experience: 35 yrs. Victim orange: Yes. Violations noted: No.

**12/16** – Yates. Victim unintentionally shot themselves in the foot. Age 66. Hunting experience: 50 yrs. Victim orange: Yes. Violations noted: No.



***New York is thankful for the dedication of thousands of Hunter Education Program volunteer instructors whose efforts have made hunting safer than ever.***