

# ELEVATED HUNTING INCIDENTS 2025



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

		2023	2024	2025	5yr avg
<b>Total Incidents</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>FATAL</b>	No full-body harness	0	1	1	1.2
	With harness but not attached to tree	0	1	0	0.2
	With harness attached to tree	0	0	0	0.2
<b>NON-FATAL</b>	No full body harness	5	6	7	7.4
	With harness but not attached to tree	2	1	0	1.4
	With harness attached to tree	1	2	1	0.6
<b>Type of Stand</b>		<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	
Climbing stand		0	1	0	
Hang-on stand		4	3	1	
Ladder stand		3	7	4	
Tower/Tripod stand		1	0	0	
Home-made stand		0	0	3	
Hunting Saddle		0	0	0	
Unknown		0	0	1	

## PREVENT TREE STAND FALLS

There were nine Elevated Hunting Incidents (EHIs) reported in 2025, with one fatality. The average known age of the hunters involved was 50 years old.

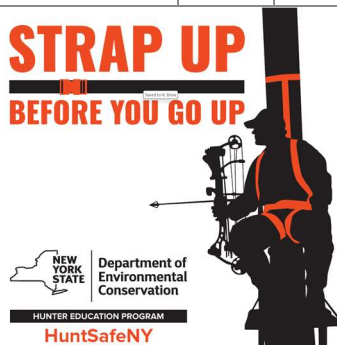
Hunters can prevent severe injuries or death if they fall from a tree stand or elevated platform by wearing and properly using a fall-arrest system (FAS). A FAS will keep you attached to the tree from the time you leave the ground until you get back down. A harness alone does not protect you if it isn't attached to the tree the entire time you are off the ground.

### A FAS includes:

- A full-body harness with shoulder, chest, and leg straps.
- A strap that attaches to the tree when in the stand.
- A tether strap that attaches the harness to the tree strap.
- A "lifeline" to keep a hunter safe while climbing and descending.
- A suspension relief strap to be used in the event of a fall.

### Important safety tips:

- Select a healthy, straight tree.
- Always maintain three points of contact (one hand and two feet or two hands and one foot) when climbing up or down from the stand.
- Inspect all equipment before using it. Replace stands, parts, harness, straps, and lifeline as necessary.
- Harnesses have an expiration date! Replace if expired.
- Once secured in your stand, use a haul line to raise and lower your UNLOADED gun, bow, and cocked but unloaded crossbow, pointed down, into the stand. Do not tie the haul line around the trigger or trigger guard.
- Carry emergency equipment (knife, phone, flashlight, whistle) on you, in your pockets, not in your pack up in the stand.
- Tell someone exactly where you will be hunting and when you will return.



For more information, or to sign up for email updates from NYSDEC, visit our website:

[www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)

## The Stories behind the Statistics: Elevated Hunting Incidents 2025

Preliminary descriptions of EHIs as of 1/27/2026, as some incidents are still under investigation. List may not include every incident, as DEC is not always notified when an EHI occurs. **Fatalities are listed in bold italics.**

**10/3** – Niagara County. Wearing a harness. Unknown stand type. The tree stand collapsed and safety harness snapped, causing the hunter to fall approximately 15 feet and sustain multiple serious injuries. Hunter age: Unknown. Hunting experience: Unknown.

**10/24** – ***Onondaga County. Not wearing a harness. Ladder stand. The hunter was found at the bottom of the stand, deceased, and was determined to have suffered a head injury from the fall. Hunter age: 67. Hunting experience: 27 years.***

**11/15** – Tioga County. Not wearing a harness. Home-made stand. While attempting to exit the stand, the hunter fell and sustained multiple severe injuries, including a fractured skull. Hunter age: 65. Hunting experience: 50 years.

**11/15** – Sullivan County. Not wearing a harness. Ladder stand. The tree supporting the stand split at the base, causing the hunter to fall approximately 20 feet. Hunter age: 67. Hunting experience: 50 years.

**11/16** – Chemung County. Not wearing a harness. Home-made stand. As the hunter reached the platform, the stand separated from the tree, causing the hunter to fall and sustain a leg fracture. Hunter age: 24. Hunting experience: 10 years.

**11/16** – Ontario County. Not wearing a harness. Ladder stand. The hunter fell from the top of the ladder shortly after removing the strap attaching the stand to the tree in an attempt to relocate the stand. They sustained a back injury.  
Hunter age: 51. Hunting experience: 30 years.

**11/20** – Tioga County. Not wearing a harness. Home-made stand. The hunter was climbing a wooden ladder when they lost their footing and fell approximately 15 feet. Hunter age: 68. Hunting experience: 54 years.

**11/25** – Washington County. Not wearing a harness. Hang-on stand. The hunter was in the stand when the strap around the tree broke, causing them to fall 15 feet. Hunter age: 28. Hunting experience: 15 years.

**11/25** – Monroe County. Not wearing a harness. Ladder stand. The hunter lost balance and fell from the stand, sustaining injuries to their back, arm and leg. Hunter age: 37. Hunting experience: 24 years.

### Thanks to our Environmental Conservation Officers for thorough investigations of each incident.

The International Hunter Education Association estimates that there are 300 to 500 tree stand fatalities annually in the U.S.

There are approximately 6,000 hunters injured in falls from elevated hunting stands. Of those injured, 80% required surgery, 30% involved spinal fractures, and 10% caused permanent disability or paralysis.

International Hunter Education Association U.S.A. (2023). Elevated Hunting Stand Accidents. *Hunter Incident Database*. Retrieved January 26, 2023. [www.ihea-usa.org/hunter-incident-database/](http://www.ihea-usa.org/hunter-incident-database/)

New York has drastically reduced deaths during firearms seasons thanks to hunter education courses that stress firearm safety. However, elevated hunting incidents have become a major cause of hunting related injuries.

Elevated stand safety has become a regular part of the hunter education course, which is required of first-time hunters in New York. The proper use of elevated stands and safety equipment will help to prevent these injuries and fatalities.

### New York State Department of Environmental Conservation | Hunter Education

Phone: 1-888-HUNT-ED2 | Law Enforcement 24-hour ECO Dispatch: 1-877-457-5680

[www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov) | <https://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/hunting/hunter-education>