

Chapter 12

TREE STAND SAFETY



Objectives

- List 4 advantages and disadvantages of treestands.
- List 4 types of treestands and how they work.
- Understand the fall-arrest system and its benefits.
- Thoroughly understand and agree to use the Treestand Manufacturers Association treestand guidelines.

Don't Become a Statistic!

A 1993 survey conducted by Deer and Deer Hunting magazine found that more than a third [37%] of tree stand hunters have fallen from a stand, and that about 3 % of these hunters suffered crippling injuries.

Of all the tree stand accidents, 75-80% occurs while climbing up or down.

Most hunters injured were not wearing a safety harness/vest.

Hunting from Elevated Stands

Elevated stands are permanent or temporary stands that place the hunter above ground level. They can be treestands placed in or against trees, or free-standing structures. They have become increasingly popular in recent years with both firearm and bow hunters. While they offer certain advantages, they also have some drawbacks, including safety issues.

Advantages

- Wider field of vision—game is spotted sooner than at ground level
- Earlier detection of game allows time to plan for best shot
- Elevation makes hunter's scent harder to detect and movement less noticeable
- Good backstop is available because usually shooting at a downward angle

Disadvantages

- Risk of injury from falling, particularly in wet or icy weather
- Difficult to carry large, portable stands
- No protection from cold or wind
- Little room for movement

Portable Tree Stands

Portable tree stands are safe and environmentally friendly. Commercially made stands certified by the Treestand Manufacturer's Association (TMA) are best. Homemade stands should NEVER be used. You should practice installing an elevated platform or tree stand while you are on the ground. Portable tree stands come in several basic types.

Non-Climbing, Fixed-Position Stands

These simple platforms provide about four square feet of space. They must be hauled into place and secured with belts or chains. This type of stand requires separate climbing aids such as segmented ladders or screw-in steps (where they can be used legally).



Climbing Stands

Self-climbing platforms allow a hunter to "walk" a stand up a tree using climbing devices for the hands and feet. This type of stand is not suited for trees with shaggy bark, such as some pines or hickories, or for trees with branches between the ground and the desired elevation. Never use climbing stands on trees covered with ice or snow.



Ladder Stands

Ladder stands usually provide a platform 10 to 15 feet above ground. The stands are leaned against a tree and chained or strapped into place. They can be used with a wider range of trees than other portable platforms and provide easier, safer access due to their built-in ladder. Three people are needed to erect a ladder stand safely.



Tower Stands

An alternative to a tree stand is a tower stand. These stands are similar to a ladder tree stand but are free-standing and can be placed anywhere that has a firm base.



Fall-Arrest Systems (FAS)

You should use a fall-arrest system (safety harness) that has been approved by the Treestand Manufacturer's Association (TMA). Carefully read the manufacturer's instructions for proper use of your fall-arrest system and follow all safety guidelines.

Always use a properly fitting, lineman's-style, full-body harness (FAS) while installing an elevated platform or a tree stand. Five-point or full-body harnesses, which are commonly used in construction, are recommended because they provide security and comfort in a fall, and they distribute a hunter's weight evenly. The vest harness is a very effective style of the full-body harness.



Hauling Hunting Equipment into a Stand

Before hauling a firearm into a stand, make sure it is unloaded. Also, you can avoid getting debris in the barrel by placing a cover over the muzzle. Once you are securely in the stand, check for obstructions and that your safety is on before you load.

- Never carry your hunting equipment up or down the tree with you as you climb. Always use a haul line.
- Before attaching the haul line to your hunting equipment:
 - If using a firearm, unload it and open the action.
 - If using a bow, put the arrows in a covered quiver and secure the quiver to your bow.
- Use a haul line of heavy cord attached to your stand to bring up your hunting equipment or to lower it prior to climbing down from your stand.
 - If using a firearm, attach the haul line to the firearm's sling so that the firearm hangs with the muzzle pointed down.
 - If using a bow, attach the haul line between the bow's limb and the bowstring so that the arrows point up.
- Slip the end of the haul line through your belt - leave it untied so that it can pull free if you fall. Put on your fall-arrest system, secure yourself to the tree, and climb to your stand.
- After you are in the stand and secure, haul up your hunting equipment and untie the haul line.

The following treestand safety guidelines were developed by the Treestand Manufacturers Association and reprinted with their permission.

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ALWAYS wear a Fall-Arrest System (FAS)/Full Body Harness meeting TMA Standards even during ascent and descent. Be aware that single strap belts and chest harnesses are no longer the preferred Fall-Arrest devices and should not be used. Failure to use a FAS could result in serious injury or death.

ALWAYS read and understand the manufacturer's **WARNINGS & INSTRUCTIONS** before using the treestand each season. Practice with the treestand at ground level prior to using at elevated positions. Maintain the **WARNINGS & INSTRUCTIONS** for later review as needed, for instructions on usage to anyone borrowing your stand, or to pass on when selling the treestand. Use all safety devices provided with your treestand. Never exceed the weight limit specified by the manufacturer. If you have any questions after reviewing the **WARNINGS & INSTRUCTIONS**, please contact the manufacturer.

ALWAYS inspect the treestand and the Fall-Arrest System for signs of wear or damage before each use. Contact the manufacturer for replacement parts. Destroy all products that

cannot be repaired by the manufacturer and/or exceed recommended expiration date, or if the manufacturer no longer exists. The FAS should be discarded and replaced after a fall has occurred.

ALWAYS practice in your Full Body Harness in the presence of a responsible adult, learning what it feels like to hang suspended in it at ground level.

ALWAYS attach your Full Body Harness in the manner and method described by the manufacturer. Failure to do so may result in suspension without the ability to recover into your treestand. Be aware of the hazards associated with Full Body Harnesses and the fact that prolonged suspension in a harness may be fatal. Have in place a plan for rescue, including the use of cell phones or signal devices that may be easily reached and used while suspended. If rescue personnel cannot be notified, you must have a plan for recover/escape. If you have to hang suspended for a period of time before help arrives, exercise your legs by pushing against the tree or doing any other form of continuous motion. Failure to recover in a timely manner could result in serious injury or death. If you do not have the ability to recover/escape, hunt from the ground.

ALWAYS hunt with a plan and if possible a buddy. Before you leave home, let others know your exact hunting location, when you plan to return and who is with you.

ALWAYS carry emergency signal devices such as a cell phone, walkie-talkie, whistle, signal flare, PLD (personal locator device) and flashlight on your person at all times and within reach even while you are suspended in your

FAS. Watch for changing weather conditions. In the event of an accident, remain calm and seek help immediately.

ALWAYS select the proper tree for use with your treestand. Select a live straight tree that fits within the size limits recommended in your treestand's instructions. Do not climb or place a treestand against a leaning tree. Never leave a treestand installed for more than two weeks since damage could result from changing weather conditions and/or from other factors not obvious with a visual inspection.

ALWAYS use a haul line to pull up your gear and unloaded firearm or bow to your treestand once you have reached your desired hunting height. Never climb with anything in your hands or on your back. Prior to descending, lower your equipment on the opposite side of the tree.

ALWAYS know your physical limitations. Don't take chances. If you start thinking about how high you are, don't go any higher.

NEVER use homemade or permanently elevated stands or make modifications to a purchased treestand without the manufacturer's written permission. Only purchase and use treestands and Fall-Arrest Systems meeting or exceeding TMA standards. For a detailed list of certified products, refer to the TMA web site at: <http://www.tmastands.com>.

NEVER hurry!! While climbing with a treestand, make slow, even movements of no more than ten to twelve inches at a time. Make sure you have proper contact with the tree and/or treestand every time you move. On ladder-type treestands, maintain three points of contact with each step.