

PRESS RELEASE FROM THE AMERICAN RED CROSS

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HUNTING SAFETY TIPS

It happens every year. Someone is killed or seriously hurt while hunting. We hear about it all too often: the Dad who thought his son was a turkey, the son who thought his brother was a deer. The sad part is that it didn't have to happen if those who were hunting had followed some basic hunting safety tips.

This week our “BE SAFE**” article will focus on keeping the many hunters in our area a bit safer.**

In the state of Minnesota there are more than 475,000 firearms deer hunters. That's a lot of guns. This article is NOT about our support or lack of support for those who enjoy this sport. It is about keeping anyone who is around those 475,000 hunters safe.

Hunting safety is not something that can be taken for granted. It needs to be *taught and practiced at all times*. One simple mental lapse for one split second could cost someone their life.

Get trained and get certified!

In the state of Minnesota, you must take and be certified in a Minnesota DNR firearm safety course if you were born after January 1, 1980. This course teaches three main points:

- **Treat every firearm as if it was loaded.**
- **Always keep the gun muzzle pointed in a safe direction.**
- **Know what your intended target is and what lies beyond that target.**

Over one million people have been trained and certified in the state of Minnesota since this regulation took effect. For additional information please go to the www.dnr.state.mn.us website.

Many other states have mandatory hunter safety education programs that hunters are required to take regardless of the method of hunting they choose. Make sure to check the DNR requirements for any other state you may hunt in.

Dress for the occasion:

The State of Minnesota DNR requires that all hunters wear blaze orange. The intention is for all hunters to be highly visible and to be noticed from a distance or when in wooded or grassy areas. There are additional rules noted in the Minnesota Hunting and Trapping Regulations Handbook published each year. Two of the most important are:

- You may not take small game unless a visible portion of at least one article of clothing above the waist is blaze orange.
- During firearms deer season you may not hunt or trap unless the visible portion of your cap and outer clothing above the waist (excluding sleeves and gloves) is blaze orange.

In addition, you need to wear clothing that is appropriate for the type of weather you are hunting in. Dress in layers that can be removed or added to depending on temperature changes. If the weather is extremely cold, wear gloves, ski masks, thermal underwear, extra socks and waterproofed boots.

Keep in mind that none of this is bullet or arrow proof. Bullets and arrows will penetrate ALL clothing.

Focus on hunting when hunting:

There's no delicate way to say this, but we all know it happens. There are those who go hunting for the sport of hunting. They focus on hunting and nothing else. Then there are those who go hunting for the social aspects. They focus on hunting and drinking. Those two things should NEVER be mixed.

Leave the alcohol at home. Leave the drugs alone. Enjoy a beer or two AFTER you have finished hunting, but ONLY if you will not be driving.

Additional Safety Tips:

- Hunt only when you're well-rested and have gotten a decent night of sleep.
- Hunt only when you physically feel well. DO NOT hunt if you have a cold, heartburn (which could be a heart attack instead) or feeling ill in any way.
- Make certain someone who is NOT hunting with you is aware of your hunting plans such as the location, the time you will be gone and who you will be with in case there is an emergency.
- Be aware of the area you are hunting in: What is the terrain like? Are there neighborhoods and people living near by? Where is the nearest

hospital? Do you know the people you are hunting with and are they GOOD hunters who also focus on safety?

- **DO NOT take children under thirteen (13) with you. If you take anyone under eighteen (18) with you, keep them by your side at all times. They are NOT experienced hunters!**
- **Get permission to hunt on land that you do not own.**
- **Get your hunting license before hunting season opens.**
- **Purchase and use a set of binoculars to help identify game and let you see what is in front of as well as behind it.**
- **Purchase and use a good quality rangefinder that will let you know if an animal is within shooting range.**
- **If you are using a deer stand, also purchase and use a safety harness.**
- **NEVER shoot at “a sound”.**
- **NEVER shoot at flat, hard surfaces such as water or steel because of ricochets.**
- **Be sure of your target and your line of fire.**
- **NEVER load or unload firearms around others.**

Join us next week when we will talk about additional hunting safety tips.

This information is sponsored by the Marshall Independent and brought to you by the State of Minnesota DNR and the American Red Cross – Prairie Winds Chapter serving Lincoln, Lyon, Pipestone and Yellow Medicine Counties.

If you have any questions or need further information on the topic covered in this article, please contact the local Chapter at 507-532-5565.