Top 10 Hunting Safety Tips from Shepherd Center

1. When using portable or ladder stands, ensure the stand is securely fastened to the tree before climbing.

2. When hunting off of the ground, always wear an anti-fall, full-body harness system at all times. Ideally, this harness should have a descender attached.

3. Always use a haul line to pull your gear, including your UNLOADED firearm or bow, into the tree stand. Never climb with anything in your hands or on your back. You should use this haul line to lower equipment to the ground after your hunt is finished.

4. Avoid taking medications that may cause drowsiness before hunting. Never hunt while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

5. Treat every firearm as if it were loaded. Be cognizant of the firearm's muzzle at all times.

6. Clearly identify the target and what is in front of and behind it.

7. Keep your finger outside of the trigger guard until you are ready to shoot.

8. Dress properly and be prepared for the worst possible weather conditions. Being cold or wet can increase the likelihood of a fall or accident.

9. Have in place a rescue plan, including the use of a cell phone or signal device. Ensure that your cell phone has coverage in the area where you will be hunting.

10. Put hunting plans in writing, or text/email them to a friend or family member. Include dates, times, location and expected time of return. Also, in a spot that is visible from the outside of your vehicle, leave a printed copy of your hunting plans.

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