

 SAFETY FIRST

Tree Stand Safety Checklist

Pre-season inspection guide — complete before your first hunt of the year



Falls from tree stands are the #1 cause of hunting injuries. Complete this checklist every season — no exceptions.

From the Field Dispatch
Ridgeline Supply Co.
ridgelinegearco.com

Full-Body Harness & PPE

Your harness is your last line of defense. Inspect it before every single season — not just when you buy a new one.

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{[ ['Harness expiration date', 'Most harnesses expire 5 years from manufacture date. Check the label tag.'], ['All webbing straps — no fraying, cuts, or UV degradation', 'Lay each strap flat in sunlight. Replace if any strand is severed or webbing feels brittle.'], ['All buckles click, lock, and release properly', 'Test each buckle under tension with your hand — not just a click. Faulty buckles can open under shock load.'], ['Chest strap sits across the sternum (not throat)', 'An improperly fitted chest strap can strangle during a fall arrest. Adjust before climbing.'], ['Suspension relief strap attached and accessible', 'If you hang in suspension, you have 5–10 minutes before blood stops flowing to your legs. The relief strap buys time.'], ['Lineman\'s belt for hands-free climbing', 'Attach to the tree at chest height before climbing. Move it up with you. This keeps both hands free and prevents a fall during ascent.'], ['Lifeline and prusik knot system installed', 'A continuous lifeline runs from the ground to your stand. The prusik knot rides up automatically. Do not climb without one.'], ['Tether connected to tree BEFORE stepping on stand', 'Connect your tether to the tree at head height before your last step onto the platform. This is where most falls happen.'], ].map(([item, note]) => ({item} {note} )))}
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Stand Hardware Inspection

Inspect at ground level before climbing. A broken stand component at height is a life-threatening emergency.

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{[ ['Platform cables/chains — no rust or kinks','Replace corroded or bent cables — they lose
up to 70% of rated strength.'], ['All bolts and attachment hardware tight','Re-torque all
hardware annually. Vibration and freeze/thaw cycles loosen fasteners.'], ['Seat/platform
platform mesh or wood — no rot','Bounce test at ground level. Softwood decking can fail
silently.'], ['Shooting rail — secure and rated for your weight','Test the rail laterally — it
must not flex or separate from the platform under lean weight.'], ['Climbing sticks — all
teeth engage','Test each step by standing on it at knee height before committing full
weight.'], ['All cam straps tight around tree','Wrap-around cam straps should be re-checked
after a week — trees compress under tension.'], ['Stand weight rating vs. your pack
weight','Add your body weight, clothing, pack, and firearm. Stay below 80% of rated
capacity.'], ['No wasp nests or hornet activity in stand','Disturbing a nest at 20 feet is a
genuine emergency. Check before the season with a long stick.'], ].map(([item, note]) => (
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Tree & Hunt Site Inspection

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{[ ['Tree is alive, healthy, and appropriate species','Dead or dying trees can fail without
warning. Avoid silver maples, cottonwoods, and any tree with significant fungal growth at
the base.'], ['Tree diameter at your hang height is 8"+ ','Minimum 8 inches for safe stand
support. Preferred 10–14 inches.'], ['No widowmakers (dead branches) above the
stand','Look straight up and all around. A dead branch dropped 20 feet has lethal force.'],
['No poison ivy/oak on the tree or approach path','You will touch the tree with bare hands.
Check before you hang the stand.'], ['Clear approach path for quiet entry and emergency
exit','Know how you'll get down in the dark. Mark a clear path to the ground before
hunting.'], ['Haul line ready for gear','Never carry firearms or bows while climbing. Use a
haul line — unloaded firearm with action open, safety on.'], ['Hunt partner knows your
location','File a hunt plan: GPS coordinates, stand name, expected return time, vehicle
description.'], ['Phone or emergency device — charged','Cell coverage is unreliable. A SPOT
or Garmin InReach is the correct emergency device in remote stands.'], ].map(([item, note])
=> (
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Suspension Trauma Protocol

If you fall and are suspended in your harness: deploy your suspension strap, pump your legs continuously, and call for help immediately. Unconsciousness from suspension trauma can occur in as little as 5 minutes. The suspension relief strap (a loop of webbing attached to your harness) lets you stand in the loop and take weight off your legs until help arrives.

Hunt Safely. Hunt Every Year.

The best hunters are the ones who make it home. A 10-minute pre-season inspection is the highest-ROI safety habit in hunting.



Annual Inspection

Every stand, every year — even if it \"looked fine\" last season



Always Wear Your Harness

From the moment you leave the ground to the moment you return



File a Hunt Plan

GPS coordinates + return time. Every single hunt.

SHOP SAFETY GEAR

Harnesses, Haul Lines & Stand Hardware

Field-tested safety gear for every stand hunter — reviewed for quality before it hits the shelf.

ridgelinegearco.com/shop/hunting