

Practice Year-Round Treestand Safety

It May Just Save Your Life

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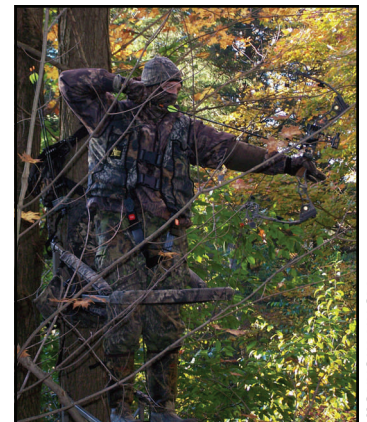
If your “honey-do” list that piled up during last bow season is finally done, here is something that you need to do for yourself. The off season is the perfect time to do an extensive treestand safety check, and repair job if needed. Too often we take for granted one of the most important pieces of equipment that we rely on season after season— our treestands. Now that the season is over and the hunting equipment is all put away, that doesn’t mean it is time to relax.

Following a Safety Checklist

My annual treestand checklist ranges from paint touch ups to a complete facelift if needed. Starting with a wire brush or sandpaper to remove rust down to polished metal is a must. If rust penetrates the full thickness of the metal, the structural integrity is compromised and, in my opinion, the stand is shot. This may not be the case with ladder stands or climbing sticks where just a small section may be bad. That section can possibly be removed keeping the structural integrity of the rest of the stand intact. This may result in you having a shorter stand, however.

After all of the prep work is done, two to three coats of paint in a well-ventilated area is next. Take your time between coats. Not rushing this part will result in a durable finish that will last more than a season. Allow all painted parts to dry completely and air out for a couple days in a location protected from the weather before storing. As a precaution, I also let painted stands sit out for a week in a location protected from the elements before the season starts to eliminate paint odors.

Next, a check of all bolts, knobs, welds, and cables is in order. If I find a compromised bolt, nut, or weld, this constitutes an immediate return to the manufacturer for repair or replacement. Remember to call first as each treestand manufacturer has their own return policies. If my cables are intact and show no obvious signs of wear, a replacement cable cover of shrink material is inexpensive and can preserve the cable’s life. If a flaw in the cable material is detected, **don’t wait, replace!** Replacement cable covers, knobs, and cables can easily be ordered by phone or website from your stand’s manufacturer. If your stand is outdated it may be time to update to a newer model for safety’s sake.



Kevin Mennett

Do not take shortcuts on treestand safety.

Finishing Touches

Finally, any worn non-skid tape or lifted edges on the stand’s platform can be replaced or trimmed. Most hardware stores sell non-skid tape by the roll for a minimal cost. I recently purchased some of this material for \$0.84 per foot for 2” wide tape. If you are replacing old strips, make sure all the old residue has been removed before applying the new ones. When doing this, I prefer to use a product called Goo-Gone. Because of its strong citrus smell however, a baking soda and 20 Mule Team Borax scrubbing is in order, followed by a good rinse and overnight drying. This approach may take a little longer, but the new tape will last at least three to four seasons.

Conclusion

A few hours over a weekend or two on a nice spring day, reliving hunts from last fall while you work is a good way to cure cabin fever while getting some important work done. Before you know it, the bow will be in your hand and shooting practice for this season will be next on your list of things to do. Safety is something you must be concerned with constantly. Never compromise your safety by being lazy and cutting corners. Be safe, hunt smart, and practice, practice, practice.