

HUNTER SAFETY



Hello, I am DNR Conservation Officer Eric Schettler. I am recently new to the Martin County area moving from the Pequot Lakes, Breezy Point area. While living there for the past 10 yrs, I was employed as a Police Officer for 6 of them. I enjoyed my time there but still wanted to seek out my goal in life to be a Conservation Officer. I am no stranger to the agricultural, flat land area of Southern Minnesota. I grew up on a farm Northwest of Worthington until the year 1990. Throughout my life I have enjoyed the outdoors in all parameters. As luck would have it we are just in the beginning of the firearms / bow hunting season and would like to take this opportunity to give everyone a few reminders.

First of all tell someone where you are going and how long you are going for. Possibly bring a cell phone in case of an emergency. Bring the right gear along for the hunt. I've recalled several times when you wish you had brought warmer clothing to wear while sitting in the stand.

Lets talk about stands. For some reason many hunters feel the need to carry their firearm or bow in one hand while climbing with the other. All of a sudden they loose their footing on the rung of the ladder or spike due to the frost and end up on the ground lying on their weapon. This is how many stand hunters get injured or even worse. Use a rope to lower and raise your equipment in the stand. It works also to have a sling attached to your firearm to sling it on your back.

Here's a big tip. Never have your gun loaded and the safety off when it is not needed. This is probably the number one cause of many accidents in the field. Many hunters want to have it ready for the, "just in case" scenario. This is very unsafe. In fact an accident, which occurred in McLeod Co. of last year, happened just like that. While duck hunting with his trusty dog in a boat, the hunter placed his gun down in the boat and helped his dog in. As he did this, the dog stepped on the gun trigger, which fired the shotgun and thus the dog shot his owner in the hand. Remember, many things can fire a gun not just the human finger.

I looked back on the hunting incident summary dating back to 1947. Since that time things have gotten better. I give credit for this to the firearms safety program and the good work by the volunteer instructors. I encourage everyone who hasn't taken this program to due so. It is not just for young kids to go hunting. It is for everyone who

wants to learn about the fundamentals of firearms and how to handle them properly and safely. Last year there were 16 hunting accidents with no fatalities. The worst year was in 1969 with 140 incidents and 18 fatalities. In 1961 there were 29 incidents and all 29 ended up as fatalities.

Lastly, read the hunting regulations and synopsis. This should be considered your hunting bible. Know what you can and cannot do. If you have a question don't hesitate to call the DNR information line at: 1-888-646-6367 or the web site at www.dnr.state.mn.us. Good luck hunting and be safe this hunting season.