



# COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT FOR INJURY PREVENTION COORDINATORS

## HUNTING SAFETY

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All materials in this toolkit are developed by the American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division (ATSPA) and may be adapted with credit for local use.

## **Toolkit Overview**

- **Purpose:** Purpose: The purpose of this toolkit is to coordinate messaging, outreach strategies, and customizable resources to raise awareness and promote safe hunting practices in Pennsylvania communities.

### **This toolkit equips partners with practical communication tools to:**

- Increase knowledge of how to prepare for emergencies
- Promote preemptive safety communication and behaviors
- Encourage early action and planning for emergencies
- Reduce panic and reactive actions in crises
- Connect Pennsylvanians to lifesaving resources and tools

### **Primary Goals:**

- Increase awareness of the importance of safety when hunting for individuals and families.
- Encourage consistent review of hunting safety and best practices
- Promote preparedness for accident, severe weather, and other unexpected emergencies.
- Help reduce injuries and improve community resilience through proactive planning.

### **Target Audience:**

- Licensed and Active Hunters
- New and Youth Hunters
- Families and Community Members
- Outdoor Sports Enthusiasts
- Local Leaders and Educators
- The materials can be adapted for rural, suburban, and urban Pennsylvania communities.

### **Key Messages**

1. Firearm injuries are preventable.
2. Safe storage saves lives.
3. Treat every firearm as if it's loaded.
4. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
5. Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
6. Be sure of your target and what's beyond it.

### **Messaging Framework**

- Tone: Nonjudgmental, respectful, practical, and collaborative
- Voice: Community-minded, clear, non-confrontational
- Core Topics:
  - Firearm rules
  - Pre-hunt planning
  - Tree stand safety
  - Visibility
  - Communication
  - Equipment checks
  - Basic first aid

# Outreach Tools

## Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

### Sample radio script (15-30 seconds)

#### 15 Seconds

Hunting is a proud Pennsylvania tradition, and every great tradition relies on safety. Firearm injuries are preventable when you put precautions first. Make sure your next hunt starts with a plan and ends with a safe journey home. Brought to you by [Organization Name].

#### 30 Seconds

A successful hunt isn't just about hitting your target, it's about making it home safely. Before stepping into the woods, inspect your gear, let someone know your location, and keep your attention on the standard rules of firearm safety: First, treat every firearm as if it's loaded. Second, keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Third, keep your finger off the trigger until you're lined up to shoot. And finally, know your target, and what's beyond it. Don't make safety an afterthought. Visit [your website] to access essential hunting guides, checklists, and injury prevention tools. Brought to you by [Organization Name].

## Printable Checklists

# HUNTING SAFETY



Every successful hunt begins and ends with safety. Hunting is one of America's oldest and most respected outdoor traditions, but it's also a responsibility.

## Pre-hunting Safety Checklist

### 1. Check Your Gear

- Inspect your firearm or bow for wear, cracks, or loose parts.
- Verify that optics are securely mounted and sighted in.
- Clean your firearm before and after every trip.
- Test safety mechanisms to ensure they're functioning properly.

### 2. Plan and Communicate

- Let someone know your exact hunting location, route, and return time.
- Carry a map, compass, or GPS device—even if you know the area well.
- Store emergency contacts and local wildlife agency numbers in your phone.

### 3. Dress for the Conditions

- Wear blaze orange or another high-visibility color where required.
- Layer clothing for changing weather, especially in mountainous or cold regions.
- Waterproof boots and gloves prevent frostbite and hypothermia in wet environments.

Every household should have an emergency kit with enough supplies to support everyone for several days following an emergency.

## Safety Tips & Guidelines

 **Tree Stand and Elevated Hunting Safety**

- Use a full-body harness every time you climb.
- Inspect stands, steps, and straps for wear before the season.
- Maintain three points of contact while climbing (two hands, one foot or vice versa).
- Never carry firearms or bows while climbing—use a haul line instead.
- Keep your safety line attached from the ground up and back down again.

 **Situational Awareness and Communication**

- Know your surroundings: Identify nearby hunters, property boundaries, and hazards like cliffs or waterways.
- Use clear signals: Establish visual or verbal signals for movement, readiness, and shot opportunities.
- Maintain a safe zone of fire: Only shoot within your designated area; avoid crossing another hunter's lane.
- Avoid alcohol or drugs: Never consume intoxicants before or during a hunt—reaction time and judgment suffer.

 **Weather and Wilderness Safety**

- Carry a basic survival kit (fire starter, space blanket, whistle, knife, flashlight, extra batteries).
- Stay hydrated and pack calorie-dense snacks.
- Know the early signs of hypothermia (shivering, confusion, slurred speech) and heat exhaustion (dizziness, nausea, fatigue).
- In lightning-prone areas, avoid high ground or lone trees.
- If lost, stay calm, stay put, and signal for help.

 **Firearm Transport and Storage**

- Keep firearms unloaded and action open when traveling.
- Use a gun case or secure rack in your vehicle.
- Never rest a loaded firearm in or on a vehicle.
- Store ammunition separately from firearms at home.

 **Bowhunting Safety Essentials**

- Always inspect strings, cables, and limbs for wear.
- Use an arrow puller—never your hands—to retrieve arrows.
- Carry arrows in a secure quiver with covered broadheads.
- Know your target and backdrop before every shot, even at close range.

# Outreach Tools

 Social Media Toolkit

## POST #1

Safety is the foundation of every successful hunt. Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned hunter with years of experience, a pre-trip safety check is essential to protect yourself, others, and our wildlife traditions.

Before you head out, remember to:

 Check your gear - Inspect stands, harnesses, and equipment for wear.

 Plan and communicate - Share your location and return time with someone back home.

 Dress for the conditions - Layer up to prevent hypothermia and stay visible with blaze orange.

Hunting carries inherent risks, from unpredictable terrain and weather to equipment failures. Stay alert, stay prepared, and stay safe this season!

#HuntingSafety #InjuryPrevention #TraumaPrevention

#ResponsibleSportsman #OutdoorSafety #BlazeOrange

#SafeHunting

## POST #2

Experience doesn't make anyone immune to injury. Even seasoned hunters need to review basic safety protocols before every trip into the field.

Prioritize these three pillars of hunting safety:

 Tree Stand Safety - Always wear a full-body harness and use a lifeline from the ground up.

 Communication & Awareness - Know your shooting zones and maintain clear contact with hunting partners.

 Weather & Wilderness Readiness - Monitor changing forecasts and pack emergency essentials.

Making every hunt both safe and successful starts with preparation and discipline. Review the rules before you step out!

#HuntingSafety #TraumaPrevention #TreeStandSafety

#InjuryPrevention #ResponsibleSportsman #OutdoorSafety

#HunterEducation



# Outreach Tools

## Social Media Toolkit

### POST #3

Responsible firearm ownership doesn't stop in the field, it applies in transit and at home.

Protect yourself, your family, and your community with proper storage and transport practices:

 **Check the laws** - Always verify state and local regulations for firearm transport.

 **Separate ammo and firearms** - Transport and store firearms unloaded in locked cases, keeping ammunition stored separately.

 **Prevent unauthorized access** - Secure your firearms at home to prevent accidental discharge or theft.

Safety and security always come first.

#FirearmSafety #SafeStorage #HuntingSafety #TraumaPrevention

#InjuryPrevention #ResponsibleSportsman #GunSafety

### POST #4

**Caption:** No matter how many seasons you have under your belt, reviewing core safety rules before every excursion is best practice. Keep these 5 golden rules top of mind on your next hunt:

 **Identify your target** - Always be 100% sure of your target and what lies beyond it.

 **Muzzle control** - Carry firearms unloaded, with the muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times.

 **Be visible & tethered** - Wear blaze orange and use a safety harness in elevated stands.

 **Communicate your plan** - Always leave your detailed location and expected return time with family or friends.

 **Know your limits** - Monitor weather changes and avoid physical overexertion in harsh conditions.

#HuntingSafety #HunterEducation #TraumaPrevention

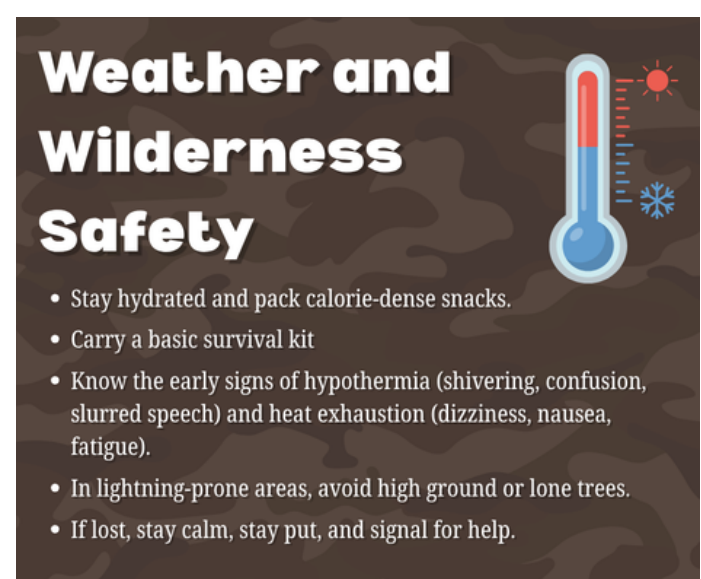
#InjuryPrevention #ResponsibleSportsman #OutdoorSafety

#BestPractices

## Hunting Best Practices



- Carry firearms unloaded, keeping the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and the barrel under control.
- Communicate your location with hunting partners or family.
- Be aware of the weather and overexerting in harsh conditions.
- Wear safety gear like harnesses or blaze orange.
- Be sure of your target and what is beyond it.



## Outreach Tools

 Press & Promotion Materials - Sample press release for local media

# Successful Hunting is Safe Hunting: Essential Safety Toolkit Released for Pennsylvania Sportsmen

As thousands of outdoor enthusiasts take to Pennsylvania's forests and fields this season, [Organization Name] is reminding hunters that safety is the foundation of a successful hunt. While hunting remains one of the state's most treasured outdoor traditions, maintaining a safe environment requires strict adherence to regulations, proper preparation, and consistent situational awareness. According to data from the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA), state-mandated hunter education programs significantly reduce hunting-related incidents. Addressing primary causes of injury, such as tree stand falls and firearm missteps, is central to keeping Pennsylvania hunters safe throughout the season.

## The Core Rules of Firearm Safety

Before heading into the field, every hunter must commit to four fundamental firearm safety principles:

- **Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.** Never assume a gun is unloaded without personally inspecting the chamber and magazine.
- **Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.** Maintain continuous control of where the barrel is pointed at all times.
- **Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.** Rest your finger along the frame or receiver until you have positively identified your target and decided to fire.
- **Be certain of your target and what lies beyond it.** Verify a safe backstop exists and understand the max effective range of your firearm.

## Hunter Orange Requirements & Visibility Gear

To prevent mistaken identity, Pennsylvania law requires hunters to wear specific amounts of fluorescent orange during designated seasons. Research from the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) shows that wearing hunter orange reduces mistaken-identity incidents by over 50%.

Hunters are advised to follow these gear guidelines:

- **Required Coverage:** Ensure compliance with state square-inch requirements (typically 250 to 500 square inches, depending on the season and game species).
- **Head and Torso Protection:** Wear a blaze orange hat providing 360-degree visibility alongside an orange vest or jacket.
- **Stand Identification:** Use an orange marker or banner to identify occupied treestands to nearby hunters.
- **Low-Light Visibility:** Incorporate reflective elements during dawn and dusk transit.

*Note: Certain hunting types, such as waterfowl or turkey, may have specific exemptions or modified requirements. Always consult the current Pennsylvania Hunting & Trapping Digest before entering the field.*

## **Outreach Tools**

 Press & Promotion Materials - Sample press release for local media

# **(Cont.) Successful Hunting is Safe Hunting: Essential Safety Toolkit Released for Pennsylvania Sportsmen**

Preventing Treestand Falls: Follow the S.T. E.P.S.

Treestand accidents remain the leading cause of serious injury and death among hunters nationwide, with hundreds of Pennsylvania hunters injured in recent years. Outdoor enthusiasts can dramatically lower their risk by following these safety steps whenever hunting above the ground:

- **S – Safety Harness:** Wear a certified full-body harness at all times—from the moment your feet leave the ground until you return to safe footing.
- **T – Tree Stand Maintenance:** Inspect straps, cables, chains, and hardware for wear, rust, or damage before every use.
- **E – Evaluate Your Site:** Choose healthy, live trees that are sturdy enough to securely support your weight and equipment.
- **P – Partners & Plans:** Hunt with a partner or leave a detailed hunt plan (including exact location and expected return time) with family or friends.
- **S – Signals:** Carry a whistle, cell phone, or signal device on your person—not in your pack—in case you fall and need to call for assistance.

Always use a secure haul line to raise and lower gear, and ensure firearms are completely unloaded with the action open before ascending or descending.

For full safety resources, season regulations, or to register for a hunter-education course, visit [Website URL].