

NATIONAL BOWHUNTER EDUCATION FOUNDATION  
**PROJECT STAND**  
STOP TREE STAND ACCIDENTS 'N DEATHS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**N.B.E.F. Announces “Project STAND”**

**FORT SMITH, Arkansas – April 30, 2008** ----The National Bowhunter Education Foundation (NBEF) announced the launch of a new educational initiative targeting tree stand hunting accidents. Dubbed “**Project STAND**” (Stop Tree Stand Accidents ‘n Deaths), the program is designed to raise tree stand safety awareness and significantly reduce the number of deaths and injuries caused by tree stand accidents. **Project STAND** is a national outreach program which will be conducted outside the normal structure of traditional hunter and bowhunter education courses. The ongoing updating of traditional hunter and bowhunter education courses will continue.

According to NBEF Executive Director Marilyn Bentz, “Tree stand incidents are a concern for the entire hunting community. It’s not only the hunter educators who are calling for action. Even though most hunter ed and bowhunter ed courses emphasize tree stand safety, the problem persists. People are still having accidents involving tree stands and are being seriously injured and/or killed. Some states report higher deaths from tree stand accidents than from firearms accidents. Studies suggest that 10 to 30% of all tree stand users will have an incident. But not enough is known about the chain of events leading up to an incident. We need to better understand what actually occurs, what went wrong, and how can we interrupt the chain of events that can lead up to an incident.

We are going to get out there with a hard hitting safety message which addresses this problem. Tree stand safety is currently taught in traditional hunter education courses. In addition, members of the Tree Stand Manufacturers Association include safety materials with over a million tree stands sold each year. New hunters and recent purchasers of tree stands may well be getting the message but obviously many are not. The bottom line is that there are millions of experienced hunters out there using tree stands incorrectly. They are at risk and they need to know it. It’s our job at the NBEF to lead this charge”.



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Tree stand accidents occur due to a variety of reasons. While homemade stands and product failures were once implicated in many accidents this is rarely the case today. Tree stands manufactured to TMA (Treestand Manufacturers Association) standards are a dramatic improvement over early products and dangerous homemade stands are steadily being replaced. Still, tree stand incidents persist. While many injuries and/or deaths result from hunters not wearing the safety equipment supplied with their tree stands, many occur because hunters are using the wrong kind of safety equipment (e.g. “safety belts” or chest harnesses.) Or, hunters are unknowingly making mental mistakes.

According to Bentz “It’s not enough to wear just any old “safety strap”. We’ve learned a great deal about tree stand safety in the past five years which, for the most part, the public is not aware of. For example, we now know that simple around the waist “safety straps” can cause serious injury and death. Many hunters are wearing the same “safety strap” they purchased ten years ago. A lot has changed since then. Today’s four point fall restraint systems are effective when worn as instructed. Waist “safety straps” and chest harnesses have been made obsolete by new technologies. Hunters using these antiquated systems are operating under a false sense of security. Obsolete fall restraint systems are ticking time bombs.

Tree stand safety is more complicated than reminding hunters to wear safety gear. We need to get to the root of the entire problem and make tree stand safety more than an afterthought. We have done a wonderful job of addressing firearms accidents; tree stand safety deserves the same attention. We also need to educate E.M.T.s, law enforcement officers, firefighters and emergency room personnel who need to know the latest medical information on treating medical emergencies like suspension trauma syndrome which is caused by hanging in a harness for an extended period of time. Again, we have learned a lot about tree stand incidents in the past five years or so and that information has to get out there”

**Project STAND** is slated to be executed over a three year time period. Year one will focus on research and message construction. Years two and three will focus on message delivery. Unlike traditional hunter education programs which focus on classroom and/or internet teaching, the tree stand safety message will be carried forth by the mass media and nontraditional delivery methods. TV, magazines and websites will all be utilized to deliver the safety message. The NBEF is actively enlisting the support of the entire outdoor community with this effort including non-hunting focused groups like youth organizations and emergency responders.

Joel Klammer, NBEF Board President states “We are taking the lead with this initiative because hunter education is our responsibility. The NBEF has been teaching tree stand safety for almost 30 years and we are very comfortable with the charge. But, we can’t do it alone. We need the help of the hunting industry and safety community. It takes money to research the problem and develop solutions. It takes money to deliver the message. The NBEF is a non-profit organization with limited resources. The more financial support we get from the hunting community the more effective we will be in attacking the problem”.



According to Bentz, “The response from the hunting community has been very encouraging. Virtually everyone we have talked to has offered support of some kind. It’s amazing what the hunting industry can accomplish when they come together for a common cause. We hope to raise sufficient funds to finance the entire 3 year program in the first quarter of ‘08. It seems as though everyone knows of someone injured in a tree stand incident. It’s a very real issue which strikes very close to home. The entire industry appears to be rallying behind **Project STAND**”.

The NBEF is actively seeking support for **Project STAND**. Leaders of the hunting community are urged to contact Bentz to discuss how they can help stop tree stand accidents and deaths.

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