



# Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way · Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271  
[www.dnr.illinois.gov](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov)

Bruce Rauner, Governor  
Wayne Rosenthal, Director

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CONTACT:** **Ed Cross**  
OFFICE: (217) 557-1240  
CELL: (217) 685-7027  
[edward.cross@illinois.gov](mailto:edward.cross@illinois.gov)

## IDNR Reminds Hunters to Make Safety a Priority

*Most hunting incidents involve tree stands*

SPRINGFIELD, IL – The Illinois Firearm Deer Season opens with the first weekend of firearm hunting on Nov. 17-19, and hunters in Illinois are reminded to make safety their top priority throughout all of Illinois' busiest hunting seasons.

"This is prime time for hunting in Illinois, and the best way to enjoy an autumn or winter day in the field, in a blind, or in a tree stand is to make sure you're hunting safely," said Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Director Wayne Rosenthal.

The IDNR Office of Law Enforcement, which administers the Illinois Hunter Safety Education Program, reports there were 29 hunting incidents last year during all seasons, and 23 of those incidents involved hunters falling from elevated tree stands, or falling while climbing into or out of tree stands.

Hunters using tree stands are reminded to use a Fall Arrest System (FAS) safety harness. Nationally, more than 80 percent of reported tree stand incidents involve hunters who were not using a fall restraint system.

As additional precautions for hunting from elevated stands, hunters should check the harness, straps, ladder and other equipment to make sure they are in good working order. Hunters are also advised to always be aware of weather conditions that could make stands and steps slippery, and to have a mobile phone within reach to call for help, if needed.

Hunters can review tree stand safety online at <http://www.huntercourse.com/treestandsafety/>

Safety educators and IDNR Conservation Police also remind everyone hunting with a firearm to:

- Treat every firearm as if it is loaded, and never assume a firearm is unloaded;
- Always point a firearm in a safe direction;
- Be sure of the target, and make sure there are no other hunters, homes, buildings, vehicles or other animals beyond the target;
- Keep their finger out of the trigger guard and off the trigger until they are ready to shoot.

Illinois' most popular hunting season, the split seven-day Firearm Deer Season, begins on Friday

through Sunday, Nov. 17-19, and concludes on Thursday through Sunday, Nov. 30-Dec. 3. Legal hunting hours on those days are one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Hunters who take a deer during the firearm season in most Illinois counties must register the deer they harvest online, or through the toll-free phone check-in system. A link to the online deer registration system is available here:

<https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting/Pages/HarvestReporting.aspx>

The toll-free phone deer registration line is 1-866-IL-CHECK (1-866-452-4325). Hunters registering deer through the online or phone systems must do so by 10 p.m. on the day they take the deer.

In many northern Illinois counties where chronic wasting disease (CWD) has been detected in deer, hunters are required to register all deer harvested during firearm season by taking them to a check station (listed below) between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Biologists will be present to take CWD samples for testing at the time of registration. Testing is voluntary, but all hunters with adult deer are encouraged to participate. The counties where hunters are required to check in their deer at check stations are:

Boone: Boone Co. Fairgrounds, 1/2 mi. north of Rt. 76 and Business Rt. 20, Belvidere

DeKalb: Shabbona Lake State Park, 4201 Shabbona Grove Rd., Shabbona

Grundy: Gebhard Woods State Park, 401 Ottawa Street, Morris

Jo Daviess: Elizabeth Community Building, 210 N. West St., Elizabeth, IL, 1/2 mi. west of business district on Hwy. 20, next to the Highland C.C. Elizabeth campus

Kane: Use Boone, DeKalb, Kendall, or McHenry check station

Kankakee: Kankakee River State Park Visitor Center, 4 mi. northwest of Bourbonnais at 5214 W. State Rt. 102

Kendall: Silver Springs State Fish and Wildlife Area, 4.5 mi. west of Yorkville at 13608 Fox Road

LaSalle: Buffalo Rock State Park, 3 mi. west of Ottawa on Dee Bennett Road

Livingston: Pontiac Sportsman's Club, northwest of Livingston Co. Fairgrounds at 18663 4-H Park Road, Pontiac (just west of I-55)

McHenry: Moraine Hills State Park McHenry Dam Day Use Area, east of McHenry on River Rd., 2.2 mi. south of Rt. 120

Ogle: Castle Rock State Park, Rt. 2, 3 mi. south of Oregon, IL

Stephenson: County Fairgrounds, 1 mi. east of Rt. 26 and Fairgrounds Rd., Freeport

Will: Des Plaines Game Propagation Center, east of I-55 at 30550 S. Boathouse Road, Wilmington

Winnebago: Rock Cut State Park, 6425 Hart Rd., Loves Park, 0.9 mi. east of N. Perryville Rd. on Hart Rd.

Hunters participating in CWD sampling can check the status of their deer (listed by phone number) through the IDNR website. Hunters who provide samples from deer that test positive are notified by the IDNR. For more information on CWD in Illinois, check the website at: [www.dnr.illinois.gov/programs/CWD](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/programs/CWD).

For a detailed information sheet on firearm deer hunting in counties with check stations for

chronic wasting disease sampling, go to the IDNR website at:

<https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting/Documents/FirearmDeerHuntingInfoCountiesTestingCWD.pdf>

In addition to the seven-day Illinois Firearm Deer Season, other deer hunting seasons in the state include the three-day Muzzleloader-only Deer Season on Dec. 8-10, and the seven-day split Late-Winter Firearm Antlerless-only Deer Season and Special CWD Deer Season (in select counties) on Dec. 28-31, 2017 and January 12-14, 2018. The Illinois Archery Deer Season, which opened on Oct. 1, is open through Jan. 14, 2018 (except closed in counties open to Firearm Deer Season on Nov. 17-19 and Nov. 30-Dec. 3).

For more information on Illinois deer hunting regulations, check the *Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations 2017-2018* at

<https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting/documents/HuntTrapDigest.pdf>

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