

HUNTING TREE STANDS

In the past few years tree stands have become a very popular piece of equipment for hunters; however, studies have shown that tree stands pose a significant safety hazard for hunters using these devices. According to a study conducted by the **United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)**, 18,980 hunters were seriously injured and 14 people were killed while using hunting tree stands between the years of 2005 and 2007. Emergency room doctors at the Mayo Clinic report that one-third of all hunters who use tree stands will experience an accidental fall from the tree stand and tree stands are now the leading cause of injuries to hunters. The study also found that a large number of these accidents were a direct result of design flaws and use of materials with inadequate strength in the hunting tree stand itself. The biggest problem with tree stands is that they spontaneously detach from the tree during use. Hunters often experience a false sense of security, believing that the tree stands they purchased are safe because they were purchased at reputable stores that specialize in this type of equipment. Very few hunters are aware that there are no industry-wide mandated safety standards for tree stands and many of the tree stands sold in sporting goods stores are either entirely manufactured in China, or have components manufactured there.

Many of the injuries caused by hunting tree stands occur because of faulty/defective equipment design or because the tree stands are made of materials which do not meet ASTM (American Society of Testing Materials) standards. Various models of hunting tree stands have been recalled by the **United States Consumer Products Safety Commission**. In 2008 one manufacturer, Ardisam, Inc of Cumberland, Wisconsin, had to pay a civil penalty to the U.S. government for failing to immediately notify the CPSC of incidents of injuries resulting from the use of its Big Foot and Lite Foot series tree stands. The company began receiving reports in

April 2000 that these tree stands were unexpectedly detaching from trees. Ardisam did not report this to the CPSC until May 2004 and 78,000 tree stands were subsequently recalled. Unfortunately, many recalled tree stands are still in use because there is no requirement that the manufacturer of the tree stand notify each individual purchaser that they are using a defective/recalled tree stand. Also, defective tree stands are often given to friends, and resold at garage sales

When hunters are hunting from an elevated platform in a tree stand, they are frequently at a height anywhere from 10' to 30' off the ground, and an unexpected fall often results in traumatic brain injuries and spinal cord injuries. A defective hunting tree stand that suddenly collapses or detaches from a secured position leaves the hunter with very little chance to respond and is much more likely to result in a catastrophic injury.

The average age of hunters injured in tree stand accidents is 44 years of age, usually during the prime of their careers, leaving their families with overwhelming debt from medical bills and the inability to support a family when income has been reduced to Social Security Disability Benefits. I have investigated numerous accidents involving defective tree stands and many claims have been successfully resolved to provide needed resources to pay for long term care for catastrophically injured hunters.