



International Hunter Education Association 1998 Incident Report

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● International Hunter Education Association Mission ●



To provide leadership, and establish standards in the development of hunters to be safe, responsible, knowledgeable and involved.

The International Hunter Education Association is an organization involving thousands of dedicated instructors across the country, plus cooperators in the shooting sports industry, conservation organizations, advisors and 63 State and Provincial Hunter Education Administrators in Canada, Mexico and the United States which make up the I.H.E.A.

IHEA is affiliated with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and its goals are many. Since its inception, IHEA has endeavored to:

- Serve as the primary resource for information on hunter education;
- Promote hunter education by providing opportunities for the exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences;
- Promote hunter education by fostering cooperative efforts between government agencies, organized groups and industry;
- Uphold the image of hunting as a legitimate tool of wildlife management, and as a recreational activity throughout North America;
- Promote programs which prevent hunting accidents;
- Cultivate honesty, self-discipline, self-reliance, responsible behavior and good citizenship among hunters;
- Promote uniformity in hunter education requirements and the reciprocal recognition of properly trained hunters;
- Strive for constant improvement in hunter education programs;

● Fully involve volunteers and other associate members in all affairs of the International Hunter Education Association.

The International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) is the international organization comprised of officials having responsibility for administering the various state and provincial hunter education programs in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

The mission of the IHEA is to provide leadership in developing safe, responsible, knowledgeable and involved hunters. The IHEA is recognized as the primary source of information on hunter education and hunting accident statistics. The IHEA provides a medium for exchange of views and experiences that enable hunter education administrators and others to adapt to meet the changing needs of hunters and hunter education. The IHEA is actively involved with other organizations having similar interests and goals to strengthen relationships, build credibility and work to assure that sport hunting has a sound future.

The IHEA is the only organization consolidating data on hunting casualties throughout North America. For the purpose of this report, the IHEA accident definitions are used. Individual states and provincial accident reporting regulations and definitions are different; therefore, the IHEA provides standardized hunting casualty definitions and a standardized hunting casualty report form.

For the purpose of this report, a hunting casualty is defined as "Any event, which is attributed directly or indirectly to a firearm or bow, and causes the injury or death to any person or persons as a result of a person/s actions while hunting." These casualties are itemized in Sections 2-5 of each State, Provincial and Region report and summarized in the graphs in this report. Activities such as target shooting, plinking, horseplay (while not hunting), or even cleaning a gun are not classified as hunting accidents. These are non-hunting accidents which are formally defined as "Any incident involving a firearm or bow which occurs while engaged in non-hunting activity." These non-hunting accidents, when reported, are summarized only in Section 9 of the State, Provincial and Region reports.

This Annual Hunter Accident Report is a descriptive study designed to provide data related to hunting injuries in a reasonably standardized form. Data collection and presentation does not take into consideration such variables as state or provincial hunting regulations, differences in topography and ground cover, length of seasons, compliance with regulations, and other differences between states, provinces and regions. Therefore, use of this data in cause and effect studies is inappropriate.

The use of this data in cause and effect studies within a state may be appropriate provided proper definition and control of variables is built into the study. In any case, generalization of findings would be limited to the state in which the study was conducted.

The International Hunter Education Association invites your comments on this report. If you have suggestions, please contact the IHEA, P.O. Box 490, Wellington, Colorado 80549, phone (970) 568-7954, Fax (970) 568-7955. Home Page: <http://www.ihea.com>

1998 Hunting Incident Summary Hunting Safe and Getting Safer



As the table below indicates, the hunting accident rate is lower than most outdoor activities. Obviously, there is a risk of injury in every outdoor activity. When compared to hunting however, some activities are much more hazardous than most people realize. For example, look at the following list of outdoor activities and compare the number of accidents for these activities with those for hunting.

(These statistics were provided by the National Safety Council, Statistics Unit in Chicago for 1995 for the U.S. If you are interested in additional numbers, they can be contacted at 1-800-621-7615 extension 2365. The numbers for hunting are

from 1996 and do not include numbers from Canada.)	
Outdoor Activity	Deaths
Boating	836
Hang Gliding	28
Sky Diving	28
Football	4
Personal Watercraft	79
Hunting	92
Scuba Diving	97
Swimming	1,700

Even with such an outstanding safety record, the fact that people may become injured as a result of hunting accidents cannot be ignored. State and Provincial hunter education programs are designed to reduce this number as much as possible. The tools at hand to accomplish this goal are found within our hunter education program and where necessary, within changes in our laws to enhance safety.

Hunter education programs include a variety of educational techniques such as: classroom lectures, demonstrations, films, firearms handling, and, live firing of firearms. Most students receive field simulation training for hands-on experience whenever a shooting range is not available. Even with all of this training, the student still needs additional tutoring from an experienced hunter. Regrettably, some accidents will never be avoided because some participants of sport hunting will act carelessly despite any of the valuable lessons they have learned.

An important question to be answered is "How does one prevent becoming a victim of a hunting accident?". Since the most common type of hunting accident involves the victim not being seen by the shooter, the best course of action is to be seen by wearing blaze orange clothing. During the past ten years the bulk of the accidents are vision related casualties.

Vision related accidents are caused by the following factors:

- The victim moved into the shooter's line of fire.
- The victim was covered by the shooter who was swinging on game.
- The victim was out of sight of the shooter.
- The victim was mistaken for game.

The use of blaze or hunter orange has been shown to reduce vision related accidents in states that require its use. The use of blaze orange clothing could decrease the number of vision related accidents even further. Its continued use is recommend for all hunting activity except possibly for migratory bird hunting. In most cases, the number of accidents could be reduced by over 50 percent if vision related accidents could be eliminated.

Self-inflicted injuries are the second most common cause of hunting casualties. These casualties are caused by improperly handling a loaded firearm in some manner. Almost 33% of all hunting accidents were self-inflicted.

One of the goals of our Hunter Education Programs is to reduce hunting casualties. Although, the number of people killed as a result of hunting casualties is low compared to most forms of outdoor recreation, we must not lose sight of the fact that people do become injured as a result of hunting casualties. To reduce the number of casualties, we must focus on two factors.

The first is to reduce the number of vision related casualties by stressing the importance of wearing blaze orange clothing and to support legislation and regulatory changes to require its use. The second is to reduce the number of self inflicted casualties. We must work to eliminate carelessness while handling hunting firearms and archery equipment alike through hands on training, with an emphasis on safe handling handguns in all situations and long guns in and around vehicles. Responsible hunters realize that caution must be used when they are in the field. A hunter cannot afford even one second of carelessness. The bullet or shot pellets cannot be called back after the trigger has been pulled. By being extra cautious a hunter may be able to reduce the chance of becoming a statistic and continue to be a part of the thousands of hunters who took to the field last year without being involved in a hunting accident.

Jack A. Edwards
Chair, Hunting Accident Committee
International Hunter Education Association

Dr. David Knotts
Executive Vice President
International Hunter Education Association

1998 Hunting Accidents	
Fatal Accidents	93
Non-fatal Accidents	894
States Reporting	48
Provinces Reporting	5

This 1996 IHEA hunting accident report is based on information received from 48 states and 5 Canadian provinces. Reports were not received from Alaska, Alberta, Mexico, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Quebec, Ontario, Prince Edward Island or the Yukon.

There was a major decrease in the number of casualties; from 1038 in 1997 to 987 in 1998 although a minimal change in the number of fatalities in two-party casualties, 66 in 1997 compared to 65 for 1998. There was a decrease in fatal two-party rifle accidents as well, 40 in 1997 versus 35 in 1998. Archery casualties continue to decrease in number with the continuing expansion of the archery training program. There an increasing number of training classes becoming available for muzzle loader hunters, and, for the first time, the number of casualties decreased dramatically. This years numbers were down from 30 to 23. We hope to see this trend for muzzle loader hunters decrease as more hunters take muzzle loader training.

Comparisons of the number of casualties:		
	1997	1998
Non-fatal Casualties	942	894
Fatal Casualties	96	93
Total Casualties	1038	987

Comparisons by species being hunted:		

	1995	1996
Deer	364	356
Turkey	111	92
Pheasant	93	92
Squirrel	78	79

Comparisons of the hunting equipment used at the time of the accident:						
	Self-Inflicted		Two-Party		All Casualties	
	1997	1998	1997	1998	1997	1998
Shotgun	126	120	511	483	638	605
Rifle	111	119	173	159	284	278
Handgun	45	40	15	7	55	47
Muzzle Loader	21	19	11	4	30	233
Bow	3	3	9	3	9	6


Most of the two-party casualties involve hunters swinging on upland game with shotguns, covering their hunting partners or not seeing their partners. These are vision related accidents that may be preventable if the hunters wear blaze orange clothing while hunting upland game. Additionally, most handgun casualties are self-inflicted.



Ten Commandments of Firearm safety:

- Treat every gun with the respect due a loaded gun.
- Watch that muzzle! Be able to control the direction of the muzzle at all times.
- Be sure the barrel and action are clear of obstructions.
- Be sure of your target before you pull the trigger.
- Unload guns when not in use.
- Never point a gun at anything you do not want to shoot.
- Never climb a fence or tree or jump a ditch with a loaded gun: never pull a gun toward you by the muzzle.
- Never shoot a bullet at a flat, hard surface or water.
- Store guns and ammunition separately beyond the reach of children and careless adults.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages before or during shooting.



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