

Hunting Accidents Bring About Lessons Learned

On a Fall day in October, Doug Smith, a former SRS employee, went hunting with a couple of friends. Doug was an experienced hunter. He had been hunting at least 50 times prior to this day in October.

Doug climbed a tree and the deer watch began. Doug said the next thing he remembered was waking up in University Hospital in Augusta, Ga. He was paralyzed from the chest down.

Doug does not remember what caused him to fall, but he did provide some preventative advice. "Never go out deer hunting by yourself," Doug said, "Always take a buddy." Doug stated that if his friends would not have found him and taken him to the hospital, he probably would have died that day.

Although, Doug is paralyzed, he still hunts. When asked why he still hunts, he says, "If I had gotten paralyzed from a car accident, I would still drive."

Aubrey Reynolds, Manager of Internal Oversight Division, has taken Doug on hunting trips. Aubrey stated that SRS sponsors hunts on-site for handicapped hunters.

When asked for a hunting safety tip, Aubrey said, "The biggest danger is the things that people (hunters) climb." For instance, he stated that hunters have climbed a tree and there was a bee's or a wasp nest in the tree. This can cause a hunter to fall from the tree, which can lead to serious injuries. Aubrey recommends checking the tree or deer stand before climbing it.

The Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Marine Resources lists the following basic Safe Hunting Rules:

- 1) Point your gun in a safe direction
- 2) Treat every gun as if it is loaded
- 3) Be sure of your target and beyond
- 4) Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot

Hunting is a way for many people to enjoy the outdoors. Following safe hunting practices makes the hunting experience better for all hunters.