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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HUNTER SAFETY TIPS: HUNT SMART – HUNT SAFE

October 5, 2017 (Oakland County, Mich.) - With deer hunting season rapidly approaching, many sportsmen and women will take advantage of the opportunity to share time with their friends, relax, and enjoy the outdoors. The hunting season offers much in the way of sportsmanship and camaraderie, but it also poses some obvious inherent dangers. Every year, we hear of tragic, fatal accidents that occur because simple precautions and care are not being used with bows and firearms. Don't let what should be an enjoyable and memorable time turn into a tragedy.

Taking a hunter safety course is an excellent idea. Hunter education in Michigan has taught thousands of people safe hunting techniques, bow and firearm handling, and hunter ethics. Hunter safety is required if you were born after January 1, 1960, and you want to purchase any Michigan hunting license, or if you are planning an out-of-state hunting trip. A hunter safety certificate or previous hunting license is required to purchase any Michigan Hunting License. Hunters can be licensed at age 10. A hunter must be at least 12 years old to hunt deer, bear, or elk with a firearm. Hunters age 12-13 may hunt deer, bear, or elk with a firearm only on private land, including lands enrolled in the Commercial Forest program. If you have your license, it is a good idea to remind yourself of some simple rules and laws to follow before you go out hunting. These important hunter safety tips will make everyone safer:

When Bow Hunting:

- Prior to each use, check your bow and arrows for signs of damage or wear.
- Only point your bow and arrow in a safe direction.
- Only nock an arrow when it is safe to shoot.
- Be sure of your target and what is in front of it, immediately behind it, and beyond it.
- Never shoot over a ridge.
- Only shoot when you have a safe range or shooting area, as well as a safe backstop or background.
- Do not shoot at an animal standing on a ridge top (a "skyline" shot) where you cannot identify a safe background.
- Keep your emotions under control, and think about safety first.
- Do not drink alcohol or take mood-altering drugs before or during bow hunting.
- Hunt and shoot within your own physical limitations.
- Exercise regularly and stay in good shape, especially before strenuous hunts.
- Let family or friends know exactly where you will be hunting.
- Always carry broad heads in a sturdy quiver which fully covers razor-sharp blades.
- Dress properly for the worst weather conditions you may encounter.

- Carry basic survival gear every time you go into the field, even for short hikes.
- Clearly identify the specific game animal you intend to shoot before releasing an arrow.
- Carefully cross barriers or obstacles with arrows secured in a quiver.
- When climbing into an elevated stand, always attach yourself to the tree from the time you start climbing until you are back on the ground.
- Use a full-body harness that is attached so that you will drop less than a foot if you fall.
- Always use a haul line to bring your gear into your elevated stand and to lower your gear when you are through hunting—do not climb or descend with a bow in your hand.

When Hunting with Firearms:

- **Always tell someone where you are hunting.** Whenever you go out, make sure someone knows the area you will be in and when you are expecting to be back. This is important for hunting safety just in case there is an accident and they will know where to find you.
- **Treat every weapon as if it were loaded.** This means point the muzzle in a safe direction and do not put your finger on the trigger unless you are prepared to shoot. Making this a habit will keep you and your hunting partners safe. Be certain of your target, and what is beyond it.
- **Dress for the weather.** Protect yourself from hypothermia by checking the forecast and dressing appropriately. Simply being prepared will keep you safe hunting.
- **Check your equipment regularly and maintain it.** Equipment that is not well-maintained can be a hazard to yourself and everyone around you.
- **When hunting with a firearm you must wear hunter's orange.** This must be visible from all sides and worn on any hunting property. This will make you visible by other hunters in the area.
- **Be aware of what your target is.** Be sure that what you are planning to shoot is your intended target and not another hunter.
- **Wear hearing and eye protection.** It is required at the range and you should do the same while hunting. Protect your sight and hearing from damage.
- **Do not hunt while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.** These substances impair judgment as well as your ability to control your emotions. It is not wise to use a firearm while under the influence because it will not keep you or your companions safe. It is also illegal to hunt while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- If you plan on hunting on someone else's land, always be sure to get permission from the property owner and if allowed, make sure they know when you will be there.
- Hunting from a tree, raised platform, or scaffold with a firearm is legal, but extra caution must be used when climbing up or down. Do not carry a loaded weapon as you climb. Falls are one of the fastest growing injuries to sportsmen and women.

These are a few important rules that should help keep your hunting trips safer. For more information on hunter safety and other seasonal information, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has an abundance of information on their website at www.michigan.gov/dnr.

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