2015 Hunter Education Annual Report

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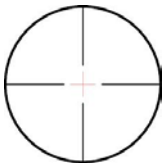
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
101 S Webster Street
Madison, WI 53703

PUBLE003

Wisconsin Hunter Education Annual Report-2015

***Treat every firearm as if it is loaded *Always point the muzzle in a safe direction * Be certain of your target and what's beyond *Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot**



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***Treat every firearm as if it is loaded *Always point the muzzle in a safe direction * Be certain of your target and what's beyond *Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot**

Mission Statement and Goals:

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Hunter Education and Bowhunter Education Programs mission is to promote safety, conservation and Wisconsin's hunting heritage through a comprehensive educational program for the people of Wisconsin.

The goals of the Wisconsin DNR Hunter Education Program are as follows:

- To develop, deliver and maintain standardized curriculum that meets or exceeds the International Hunter Education Associations (IHEA) and the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) recommendations and standards for basic and advanced hunter education programs.
- To enhance and sustain a progressive, professional, effective and efficient WI DNR Hunter Education Program.
- To recruit, develop and retain safe, knowledgeable and responsible hunters.
- To increase public awareness and understanding of the value and role of hunting in sound wildlife management and conservation.
- To develop and maintain a comprehensive program with agency-wide support; with adequate and stable funding.

The Law Enforcement Bureau has many goals. One of the bureau's goals is to enhance opportunity, safety and enjoyment of outdoor recreational experiences in Wisconsin. This goal also includes a strategy;

Enhance outdoor recreational sporting opportunities by reducing the number of incidents, fatalities, user conflicts and property damage through education and collaborative efforts with internal and external partners.

Hunter Education Courses Offered:

WDNRs Hunter Education Program offers three convenient ways to become hunter safety certified:

Option 1: Basic Hunter Education Traditional + Range/Skills Test Day – Course is non-age specific: Instructors teach this course in a traditional classroom setting using Department lesson plans and agendas. Students prepare for the exams by completing the chapter reviews in the Department supplied student manual. The hunter education course instills in students the knowledge and skills to be a responsible and safe hunter. Students learn how hunting accidents are caused and how they can be prevented. Hunter responsibility and safety are stressed throughout the classes, which consist of lectures, demonstrations, group discussions, practical exercises and individual study and activity assignments.
A $10.00 DNR fee is required to obtain certification.

Option 2: Online Internet Hunter Education Course + Skills Test Day – Course is non-age specific: Offered since 1996, this course combines the use of the internet and the completion of a specific agenda and lesson plans during a field day. Students register with an instructor and then complete the online training before attending the field day where they participate in multiple hands-on learning stations and complete the required exams. Cost will vary depending on which website the student chooses to complete the online portion.
The four DNR approved online courses are:

- hunteredcourse.com/state/online-hunter-safety-course-wisconsin ($13.00)
- hunter-ed.com/wisconsin/ ($24.50)
- huntercourse.com/usa/wisconsin ($24.95)
- homestudy.ihea.com (free)

An additional $10.00 DNR fee is required to obtain certification.

Option 3: Adult Hunter Education – In Person Test-Out (Internet Course Required) 18 years of age or older: Offered since 2012, this alternate option allows adults 18 years of age or older to register for an adult test out scheduled bi-monthly at WI DNR service centers throughout WI. To search for adult test outs go to the DNR website and search for upcoming classes. Search class type HUNTER ADULT ONLY
https://jc.activeoutdoorsolutions.com/wise_student/app/classSearch.do

Adults are required to take an online course on their own time; these online courses can take 6-8 hours to complete. The test out that they enroll in can take up to 30 minutes and will include a 20 question practical (hands-on) exam.
The three DNR-approved online courses are:

- hunteredcourse.com/state/online-hunter-safety-course-wisconsin ($13.00)
- hunter-ed.com/wisconsin/ ($24.50)
- huntercourse.com/usa/wisconsin ($24.95)

An additional $10.00 DNR fee is required to obtain certification.

Bowhunter Education Courses Offered:
WDNRs Bowhunter Education Program offers three convenient ways to become archery safety certified:

Option 1: Basic Bow Education Traditional Course
Non- age specific: Instructors teach this course in a traditional classroom setting using Department lesson plans and agendas. Students prepare for the exam by completing the chapter reviews in the Department supplied student manual.

Option 2: Add-on Bow Education Safety Course
Non- age specific: Much like the Hunter Education Course and Traditional Bow Safety Course this course is also taught in a traditional classroom setting using Department lesson plans and agendas. Students prepare for the exam by completing the chapter reviews in the Department supplied student manual.

The bowhunter education course instills in students the knowledge and skill to be a responsible and safe hunter. The students learn about the history of modern day bowhunting and our hunting heritage, responsibilities of bowhunters toward our environment, wildlife, landowners and others, preparing for the hunt - specific laws, clothing and other equipment, bowhunting equipment selection and care, treestand safety, marksmanship fundamentals, bowhunting methods, handling outdoor emergencies and field care of harvested game.
A $10.00 DNR fee is required to obtain certification.

Option 3: Adult Archery Education Course
The only fully certifiable online course offered start through finish, no practical (hands-on) exam required:
Adult (18+) Online Archery Course Bowhunter-ed.com [exit DNR] ($30.00) is a Wisconsin-approved online course covering all the information you need to get started. If you are 18 years of age or older, passing the online Wisconsin Bowhunter's Ed Course will complete your bowhunter education. Those under the age of 18 must complete an archery course taught by a certified DNR archery instructor.

The online course features:
Education from the industry leading experts in bowhunting education
Fun and engaging content
Videos, interactive animations and illustrations
Designed for any device
Customer support 8:30am to Midnight
Free to start. Free to study. Pay only when you pass.

Archery and Crossbow Education:
Bowhunter Education is not required in Wisconsin, but is required if you wish to go Bowhunting in states or provinces where certification is mandatory. Elsewhere, Hunter education is currently required in all 50 states, 10 Canadian provinces, three Northwest Territories, and Mexico.

A certificate of accomplishment issued to a person for successfully completing the course under the bowhunter education program only authorizes the person to obtain the following licenses:

- a resident archer hunting license
- a nonresident archer hunting license
- a resident crossbow hunting license
- or a nonresident crossbow hunting license.

Adult Only Course: In June of 2012, the Legislature passed into law, an Adult online Hunter Education Course that the DNR is required to offer. To be consistent, the DNR will now be offering an adult only Online Archery Education Course. http://www.bowhunter-ed.com/wisconsin.
We always encourage people to attend a hands-on course; however, this online archery course will not require a field day for adults.

Here is a link to the course http://www.bowhunter-ed.com/wisconsin.

Add-on Archery Course: When conducting a 5-hr add-on course for archery education, the following rules must be met:

1. The Add-on course is a separate course and roster from the Hunter Education course.
2. The students cannot be required to attend both courses. If they only want Hunter Education they are done when the Hunter Education course is done.
3. We do not use the Add-on Archery course to extend the amount of hours for the Hunter Education course.
4. The Add-on Archery Course has a specific agenda and must be followed.

Rules for Archery Education:
If you offer an Archery Add-on class, the following rules apply to that course:

Who can attend an Add-on Archery Course?

- Anyone who has completed the Hunter Education course connected to the add-on archery course
- Anyone who has completed a Hunter Education course in Wisconsin
- Anyone that has completed an Online Wisconsin Archery Education course, this can be viewed at http://www.bowhunter-ed.com/wisconsin.

2015 Hunter Education Program Summary:

In 2015 there were;

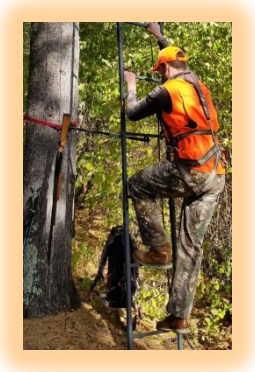
- 853 traditional hunter education courses
- 84 online Internet field day courses
- 143 adult test-outs
- 123 archery courses

Just over 25,000 students were certified in 2015. 19,585 in basic hunter education, 2009 took internet field day, 1974 adults certified and 1817 students certified in archery.

We currently have more than 4,100 active volunteer hunter education instructors.
778 Internet field day certified instructors, 26 DNR employees who support the adult test-out program and more than 570 archery instructors.

Due to the work of the volunteer hunter safety education instructor corps, conservation wardens and the WDNR's recreational education section, 2015 was a safe year, staying below the 10 year average for the entire year.

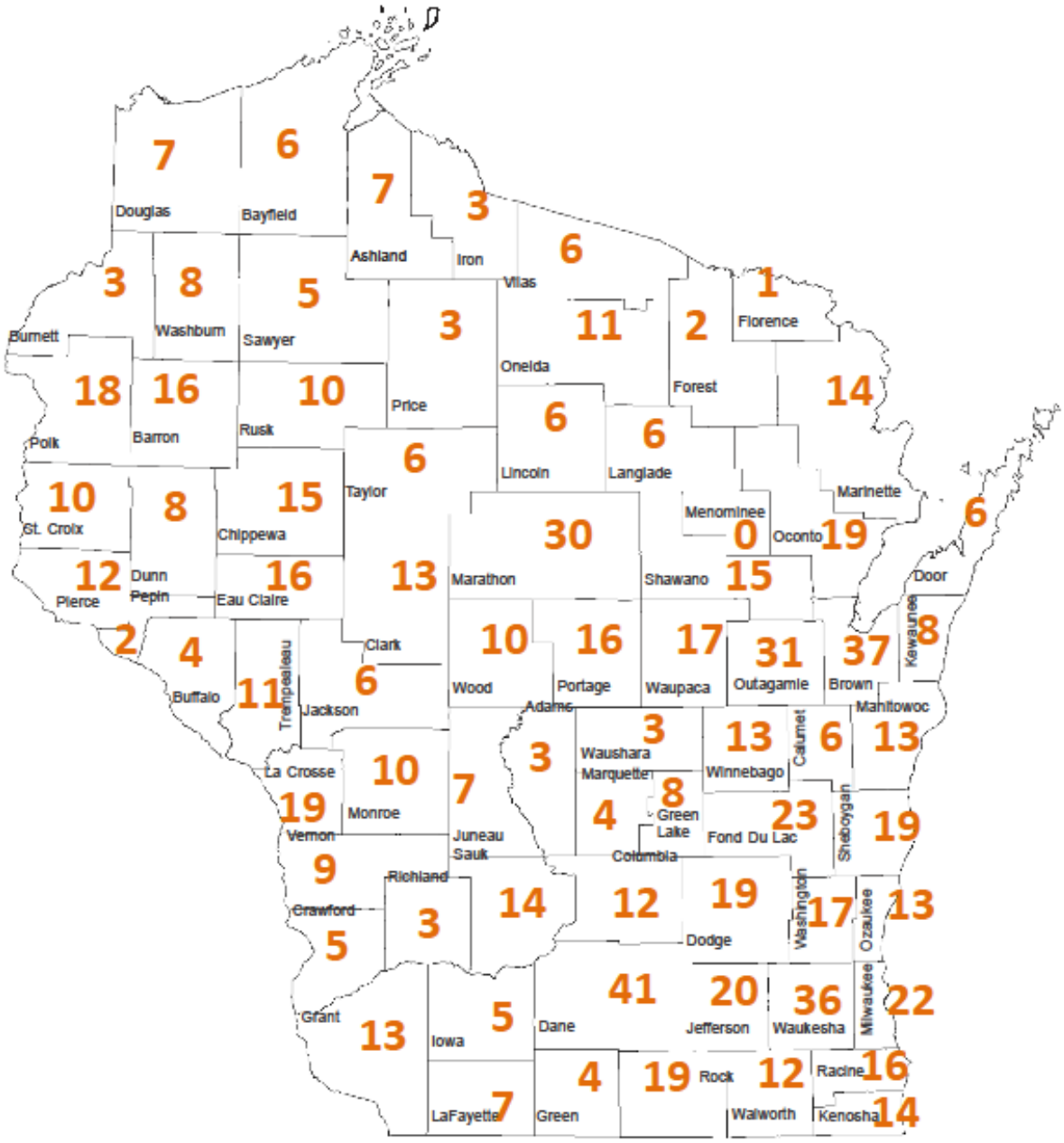
Range Shooting



Treestand Safety

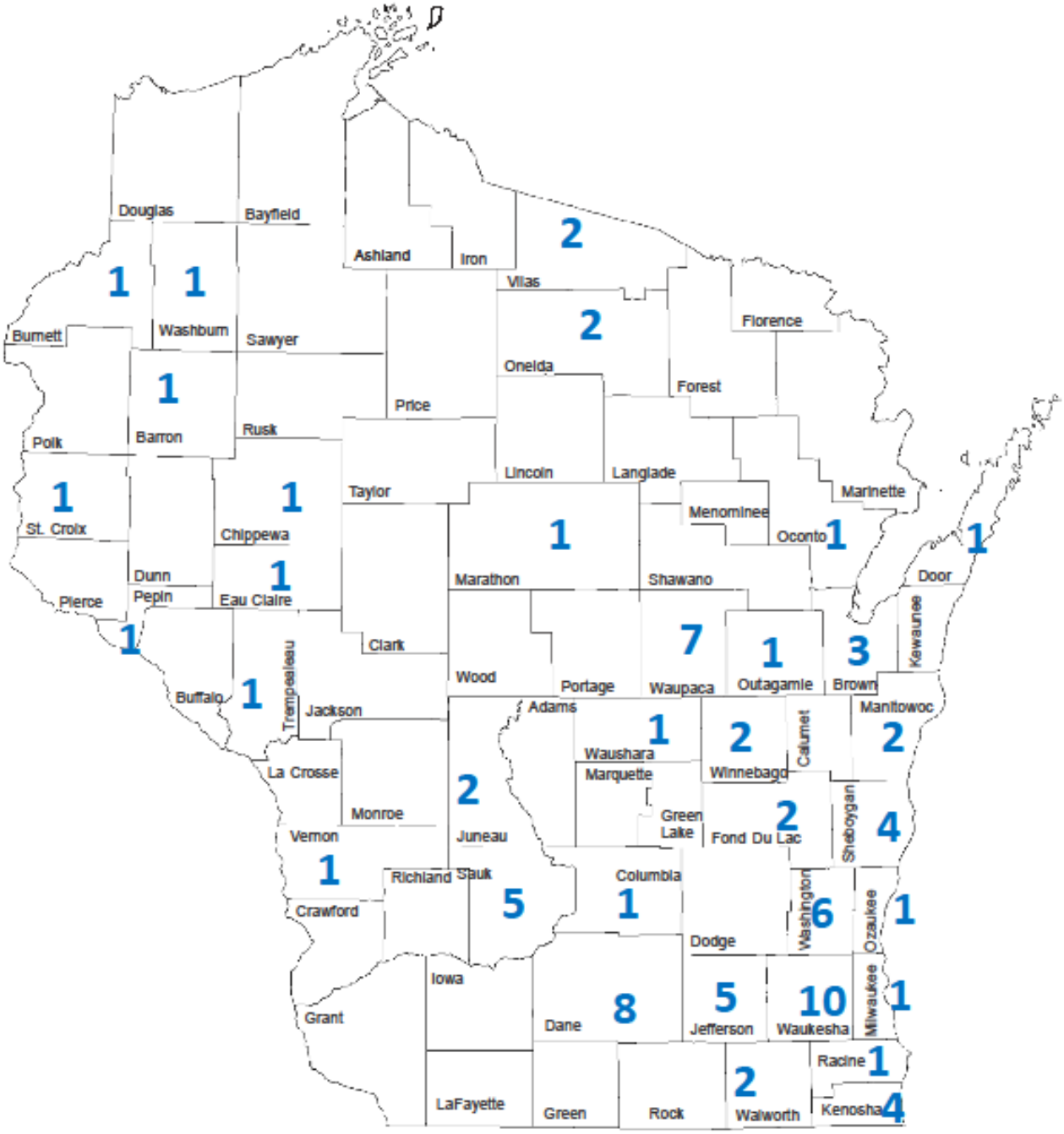
Fence Crossing

2015 Basic Hunter Education Classes by County



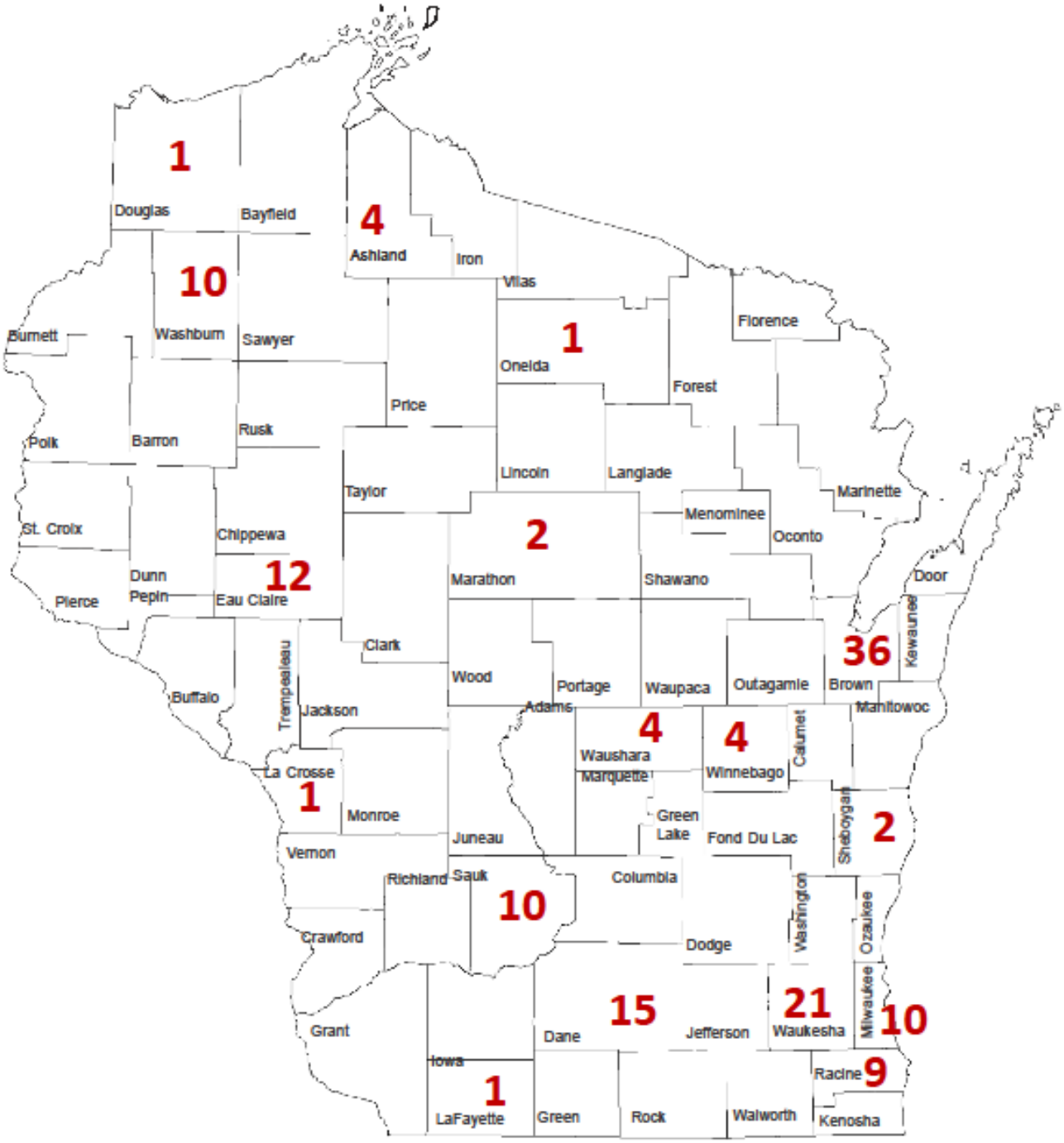
Note: 853 classes

2015 Internet Field Day Courses by County



Note: 84 Field Days

2015 Adult Test Outs by County



Note: 143 Adult Test Outs

Program Updates:

Course evaluation program overview:

Back in 2014 the Wisconsin Hunter Education program implemented a process of evaluating hunter education courses from start to finish and is now in full swing.

To date, evaluators have conducted 20 evaluations in 13 counties since this past fall.

The goal of the program is to ensure that all required standards are being met as to the teaching and delivery of Hunter Education in the State of Wisconsin. What this means is evaluators/observer's will look at how a course is being run from start to finish, including how each individual instructor interacts with the students and also with their respective group of instructors.
We will also look to capture any innovative teaching ideas that may be in use that can benefit the rest of the instructor corps around the state.

Once an entire course is completed the evaluator shares his/her findings with the Regional Recreational Safety Warden. After reviewing these observations they then share these results with the instructors as to strengths and weaknesses of the class. Appropriate training or equipment needs are discussed, and a process of implementation, including a timeline to accomplish, is then agreed upon in order to improve their current delivery of the program.

Why this is necessary, first off, and extremely important, is that as instructors, collectively as a group, we must be looking at ways to improve the courses we teach. The way courses were taught in the 70's is different than in the 80's, and the changes we have experienced in the overall program itself in the last 5 years are more abundant than in the previous 40 plus years. Secondly, and equally as important, is the mandate by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that courses be evaluated as a condition of receiving the grant money used for operation of our state program.

Up to now here's what the evaluator's have observed in all of the courses they have attended.

- Attitude of the instructors toward the students was excellent.
- Vast knowledge of instructor corps is evident.
- All involved truly enjoyed giving back to the sport and community.
- All groups have accepted evaluation/evaluators coming into the class.
- All lead instructors were open to suggestions, by local RSW's as to how to improve.

In closing, thank you for the cooperation you have given us in this process. We too are learning as we go along and are making needed adjustments along the way. The greatest benefactor of doing this will be the public who will continue to have a first class program taught to them by a very dedicated and highly competent team of instructors who are continually striving to improve.

If you would like your class evaluated please contact your RSW or Jon King, Hunter Education Administrator and they will help you schedule an evaluator for your next course.

Policy: Course Length

January of 2016 we are required to have a 100% compliance rate regarding the course length policy.

In January of 2014 Hunter Education enacted a new policy regarding class length. The policy restricted the overall length of the class to 3-weeks with no more than 19 hours. This policy was created for the following reasons:

1. Public Interest: The public wants a shorter course to meet their needs. Attending a course for 6-10 weeks in length is no longer desired, in turn, forcing people to travel the state to accomplish the required hunter education program.
2. National Influence: Though many states are already working on going to an all online program, the State of Wisconsin does not wish to follow suit. As with our other online education programs, we have not seen a reduction in injury or fatal accidents. By creating a shorter program we can keep Wisconsin people here taking our courses, instead of going to Texas, Oklahoma, and so on.

When the policy was looked at in Dec of 2013, we had an initial compliance rate of 73%. In January of 2015 we jumped to a 78% compliance rate.

Federal Grant Requirements: Instructor Volunteer Hours Report

This document is required to be completed to assist in accounting for volunteer instructors hours used to match the federal grant which helps pay for hunter education. Over reporting hours is not acceptable. Volunteer instructors are rewarded for *years* of service donated. Personal information collected will be used for administrative purposes and may be provided to requesters to the extent required by Wisconsin Open Records Law (ss. 19.31-19.39, Wis. Stats.).

2015 All Hunting Incident Summary:

29.341 Duties on accidental shooting
(1) Any person who, while hunting any wild animal or bird, discharges a firearm or arrow, and by that discharge injures or kills another person, shall immediately give his or her name and address to the injured person, render assistance to the injured person and obtain immediate medical or hospital care for the injured person, and immediately report the injury or death to the sheriff or police of the locality in which the shooting took place.

There were 23 total hunting incidents during the 2015 hunting season. 5 of the 23 incidents were fatal. Hunting is a safe activity in Wisconsin and getting safer all the time however, there were a couple of serious concerns noticed in 2015. There were 2 coyote hunting fatal incidents and 3 deer hunting fatal incidents. The point of always identifying your target before shooting needs to be reinforced by all hunters.

43% of the incidents were self-inflicted which means the muzzle was pointed somewhere towards the hunter's body; this is 3% over the 10 year average.

Even as we congratulate ourselves we must continue to improve on this record because as we all know any incident is ONE too many. In 2015, Wisconsin finished just below the 10-year average of 26 incidents per year.

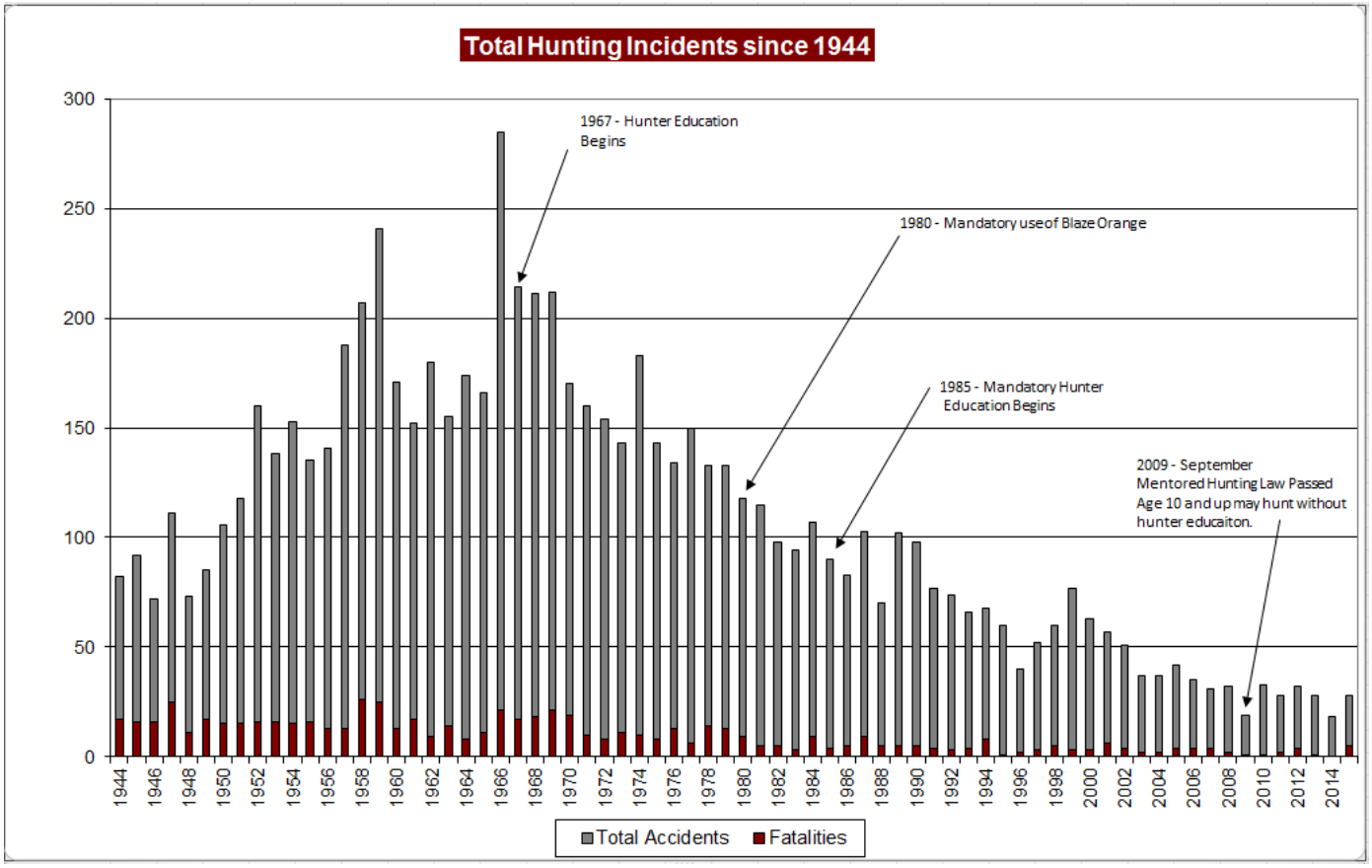


Figure 1

Figure 1: displays the history of total hunting incidents both fatal and non-fatal since 1944

Figure 2: Gun deer hunting, and squirrel hunting were the top two hunting activities with the highest number of incidents and gun deer hunting having the most. One hunting incident occurred on a game farm in 2015.

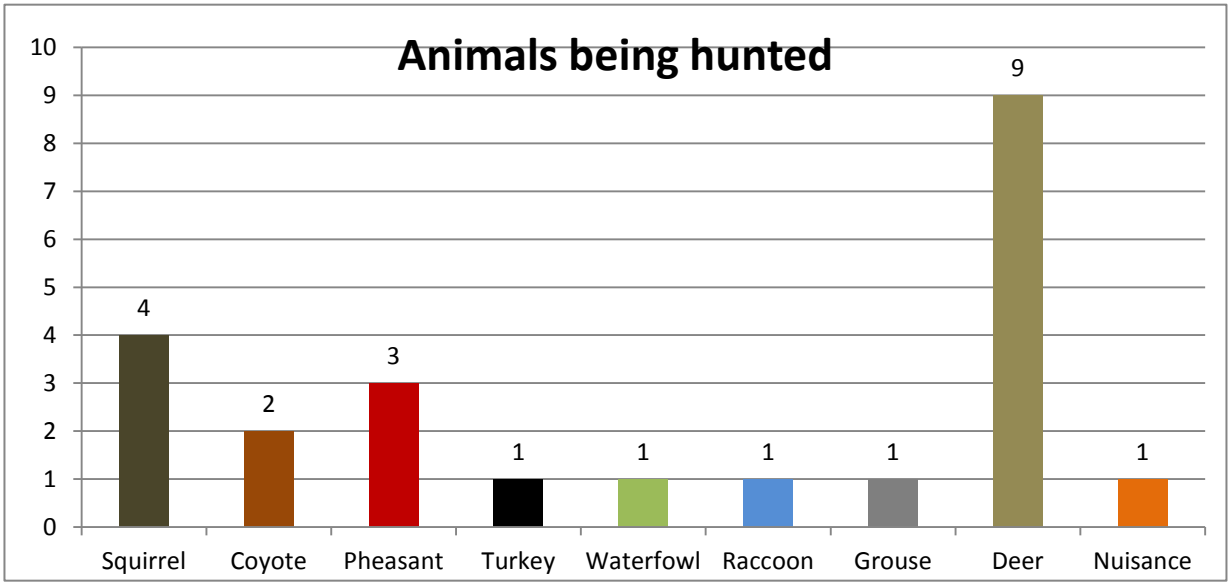


Figure 2

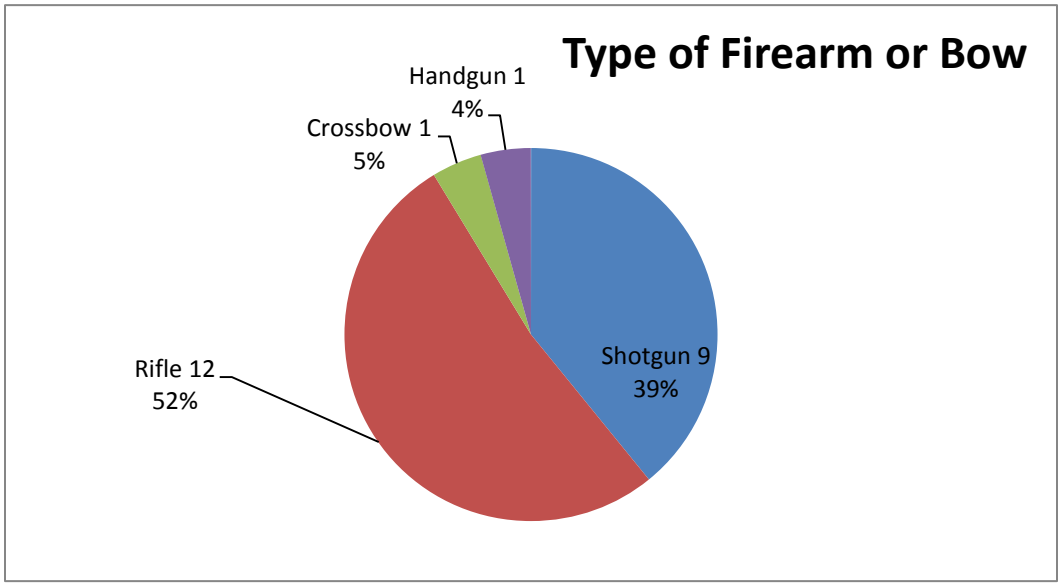


Figure 3: Rifles and shotguns remain the hunting implement involved most often in hunting incidents. Shotguns (39%) Rifles (52%) Crossbow (4%) Handgun (4%) No muzzleloader incidents occurred in 2015.

NOTE: One incident involved a crossbow

Figure 3

Every year in Wisconsin, hunting incidents are caused by people shooting themselves. In every hunter education course, DNR Volunteer Hunter Education instructors strictly teach our students to fully understand and follow the four basic rules of firearm safety. Protect yourself and your fellow hunting partners by following these essential four rules. The four rules of firearm safety can be remembered by the acronym **TABK**.

- **Treat every firearm as if it was loaded** - Never assume a firearm is unloaded and never treat it that way, even if you watch as it is unloaded. Make it a habit to treat firearms like they are loaded at all times.
- **Always point the muzzle in a safe direction** – A five year average says 40% of all hunting incidents are self-inflicted injuries. That means the muzzle was pointed at some part of the hunter's body. A safe direction is a direction where the bullet will travel and harm no one in the event of an unwanted discharge. There are no accidental discharges with firearms, only unwanted discharges.
- **Be certain of your target and what is beyond it** - Positive target identification is a must. To shoot at something you only think is a legal target is gambling. In the case of human injury, that means gambling with human life. You must be absolutely certain and correct in judgment before deciding to shoot. Otherwise, it's reckless behavior. In addition to identifying the target, a hunter must know that a safe backstop for their bullet is present in every shooting situation. We don't always hit our target, and, in some cases, the bullet passes through the target. A safe backstop guarantees that no one will get hurt.
- **Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot** - If a hunter stumbles with a firearm in one hand and nothing in the other, whatever that person does with their free hand will automatically happen with the hand holding the gun. If a finger is inside the trigger guard, that hand is likely going to close around the pistol grip of the gun and on the trigger causing an unwanted discharge. The trigger fires the firearm. Your finger has no business being anywhere near the trigger until you intentionally want to shoot something.

Figure 4: There were two major causes for incidents in 2015: shooter's failure to positively identify the target and victim out of sight of the shooter. It's not a good enough reason to take a shot when a hunter only thinks they are seeing a legal target; they must know and be certain the target is legal and safe. Having a safe zone of fire and safe backstop is equally important as knowing your target. Planning your hunt and hunting your plan is essential; know where your hunting partners are at all times.

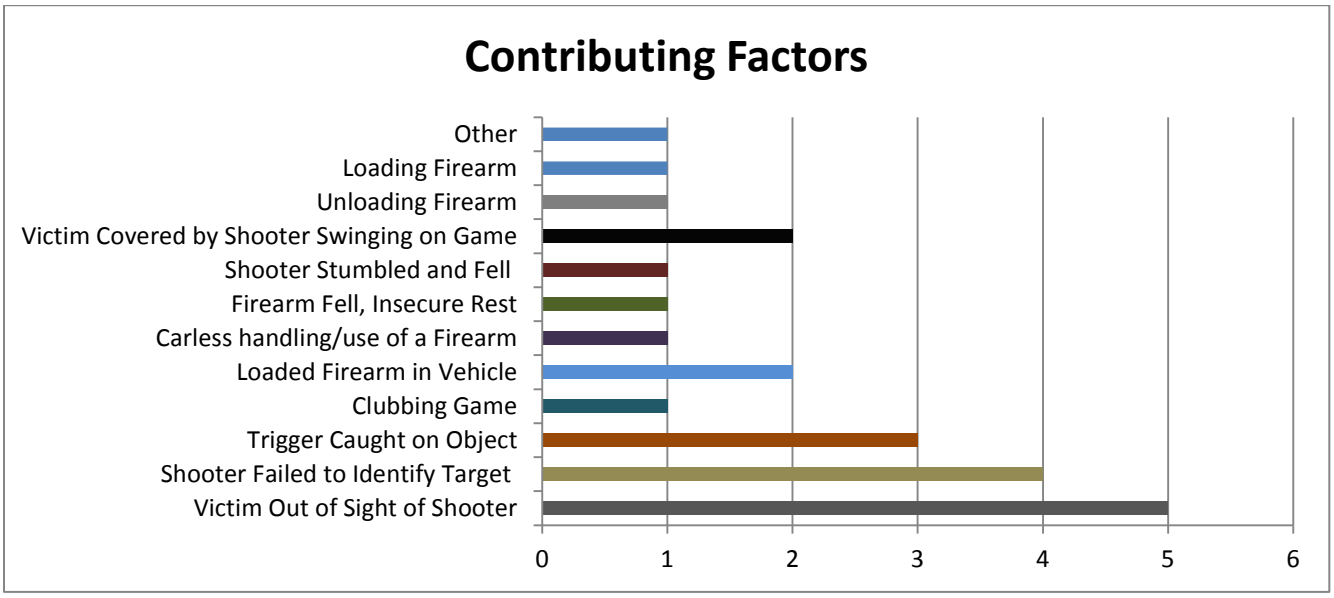


Figure 4

Figure 5: Self-inflicted injuries accounted for 43% of the total number of incidents. This is an increase of 4% from 2014. The average age of self-inflicted injuries was 44.
One self-inflicted incidents involved a juvenile (under age 18).

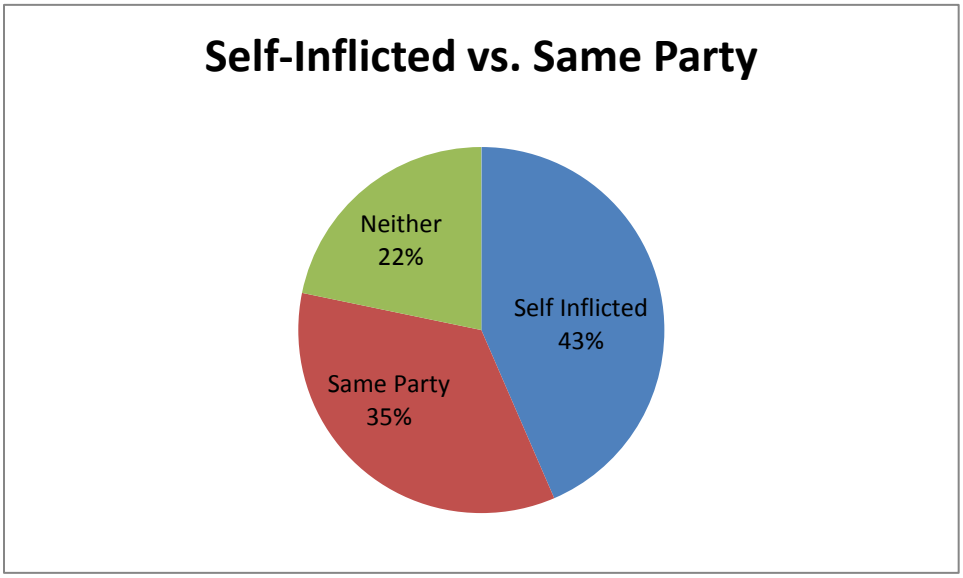


Figure 5

Figure 6 – 7: 18% of the shooters were juveniles (under age 18) and 15% were juvenile victims. 78% of the hunting incidents were caused by adult hunters. Historically, on a ten year average, juveniles have contributed to almost 19% of the total numbers of incidents.

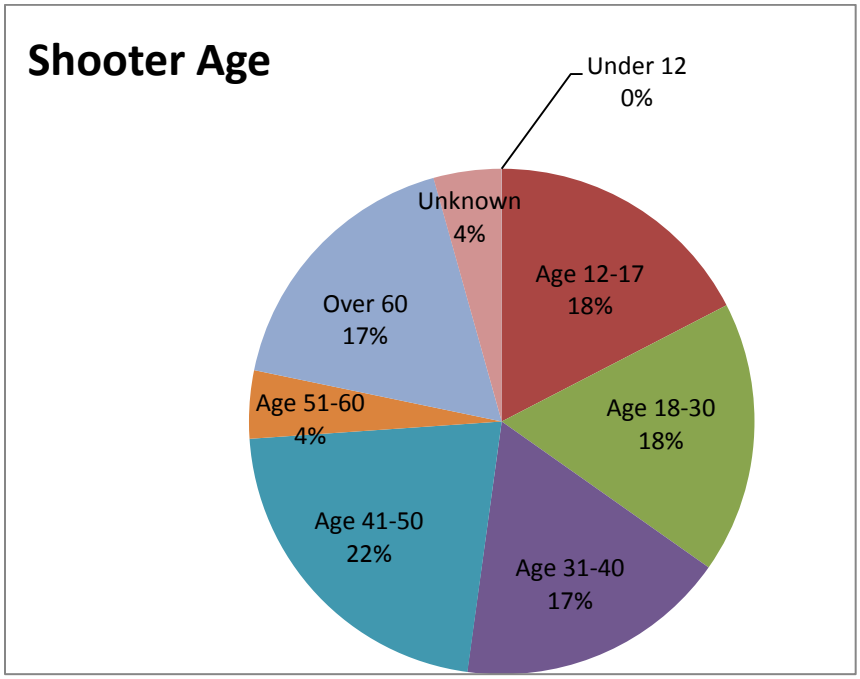


Figure 6

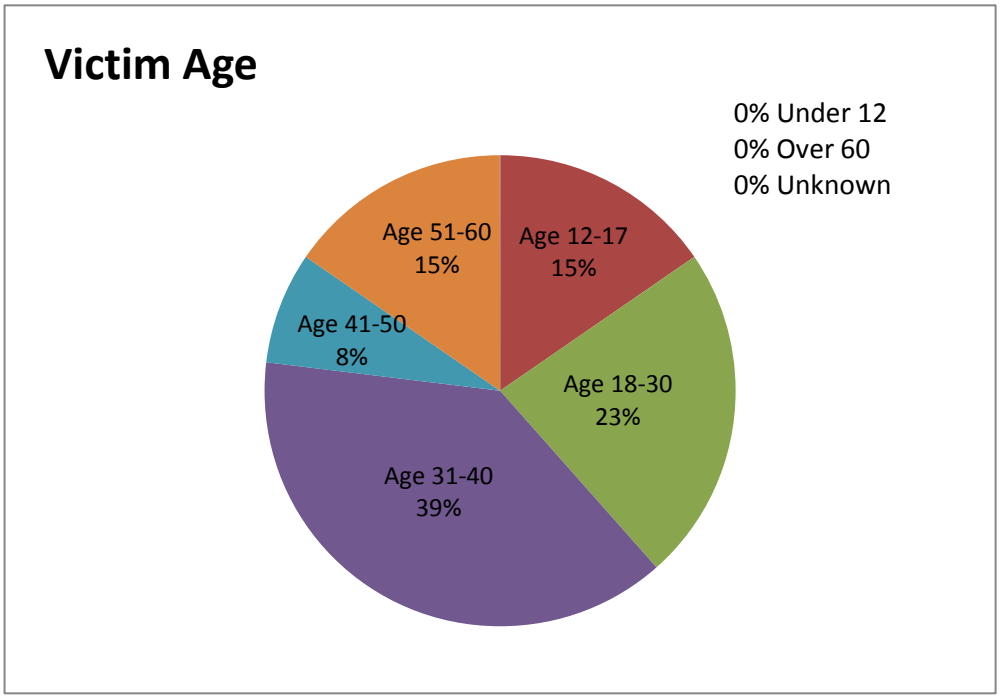


Figure 7

Figure 8: Even though our number of licensed hunters has remained fairly steady over the past 50 years, our hunting incident rate has dropped substantially.
The figure displayed below represents the average annual hunting incident rate for the last 50 years broken into 10-year increments.

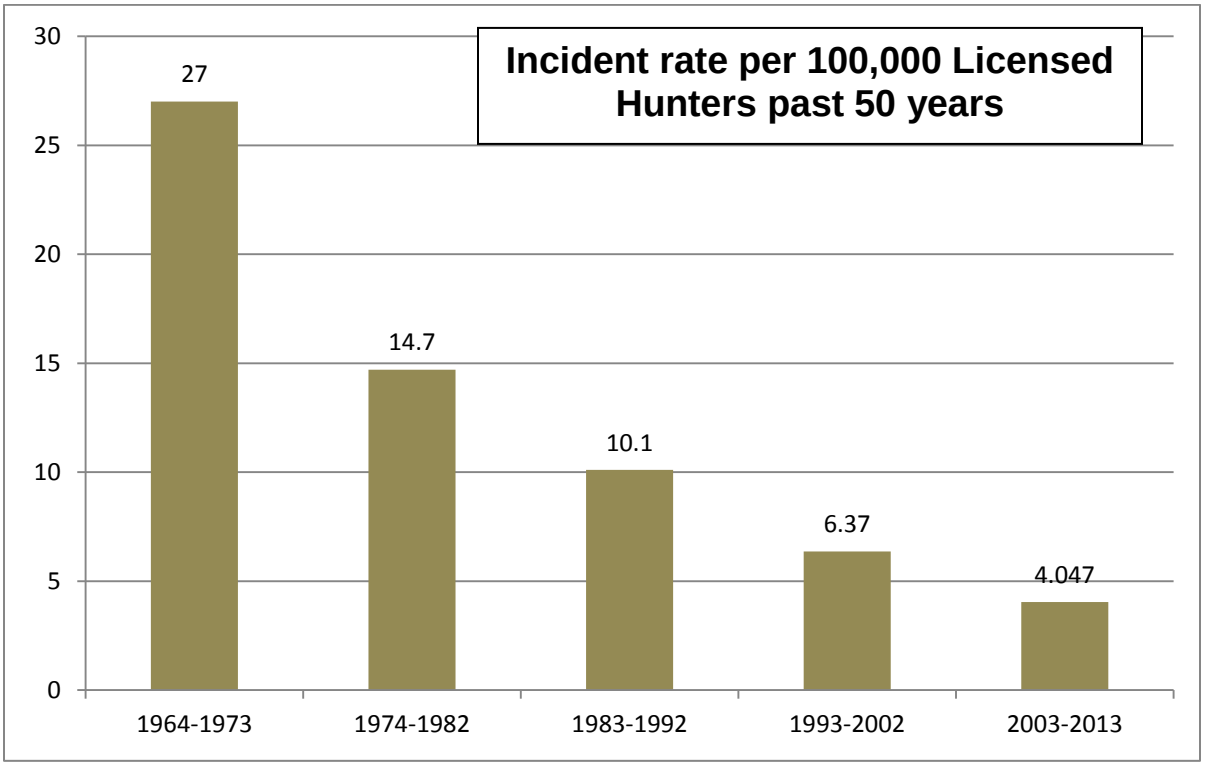


Figure 8

Figure 9: The activity the shooter was involved in at the time of the incident helps focus hunter education lessons to include hunting methods and how to safely engage in each. These include: still hunting, which involves stopping for long periods to scan and listen for game; and, stalking, which involves following tracks. Still hunting and stalking are among the most popular activities involved in most hunting incidents.

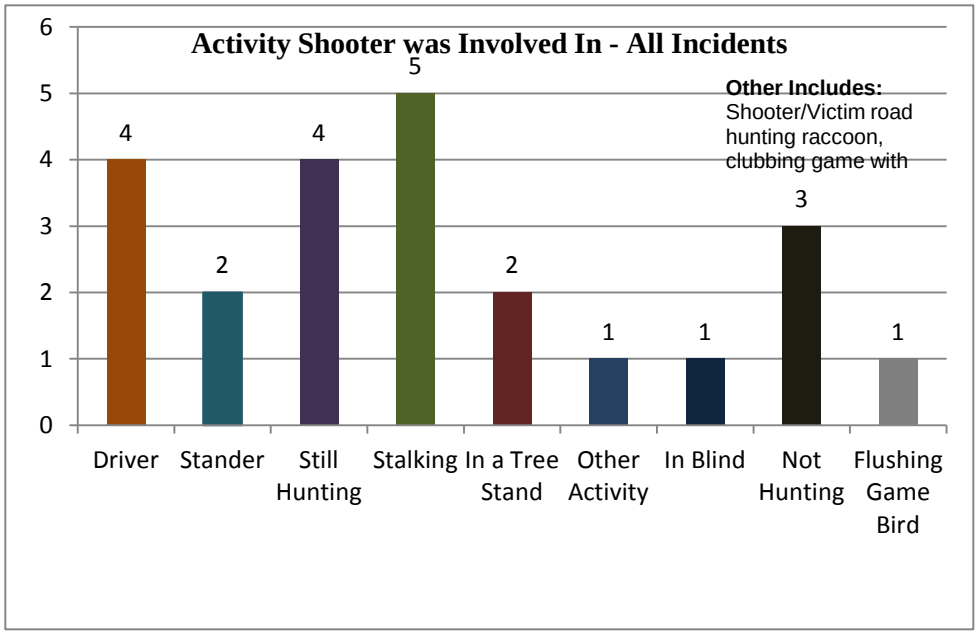


Figure 9

Figure 10: The Hunter Education Program is committed to teaching, developing and retaining safe, knowledgeable and responsible hunters whether they are a novice or experienced hunter. 26% of the shooters were non graduates of the hunter education program and the average age of the shooter in all incidents in 2015 was 38. Hunter education is mandatory for anyone born on or after January 1, 1973.

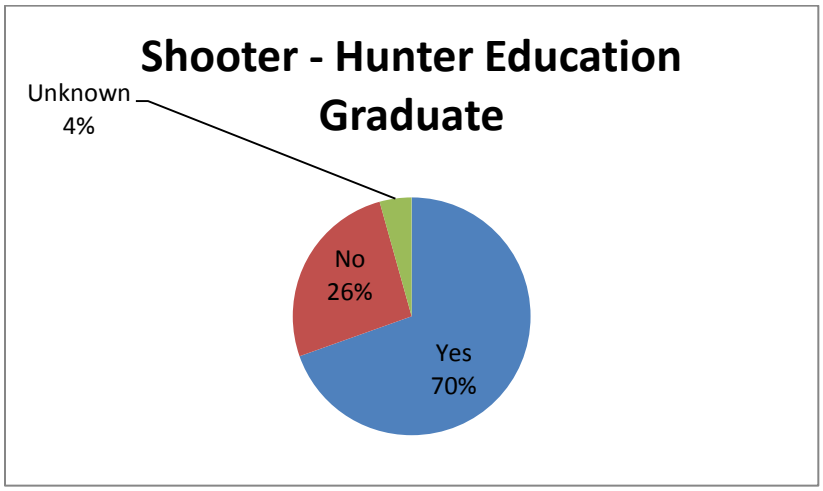


Figure 10

Figure 11: 61% of all incidents in 2015 happened within 20 yards of the firearm. 57% of all 2015 incidents occurred at a distance of 10 yards or less including the self-inflicted incidents.

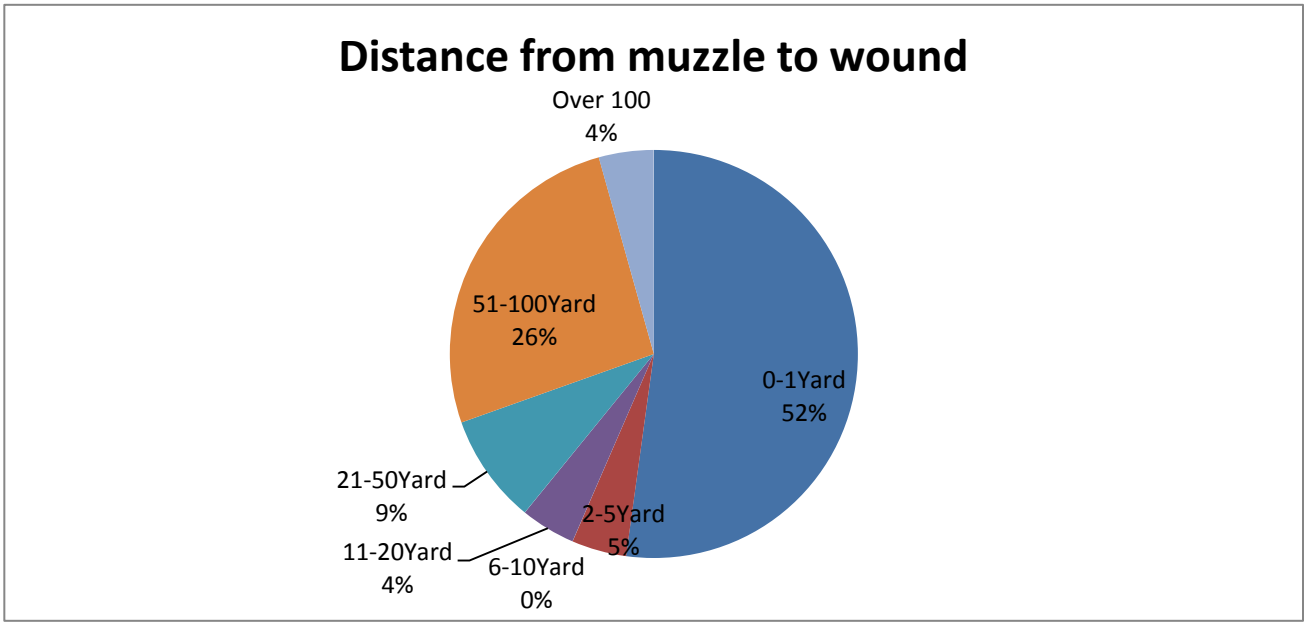


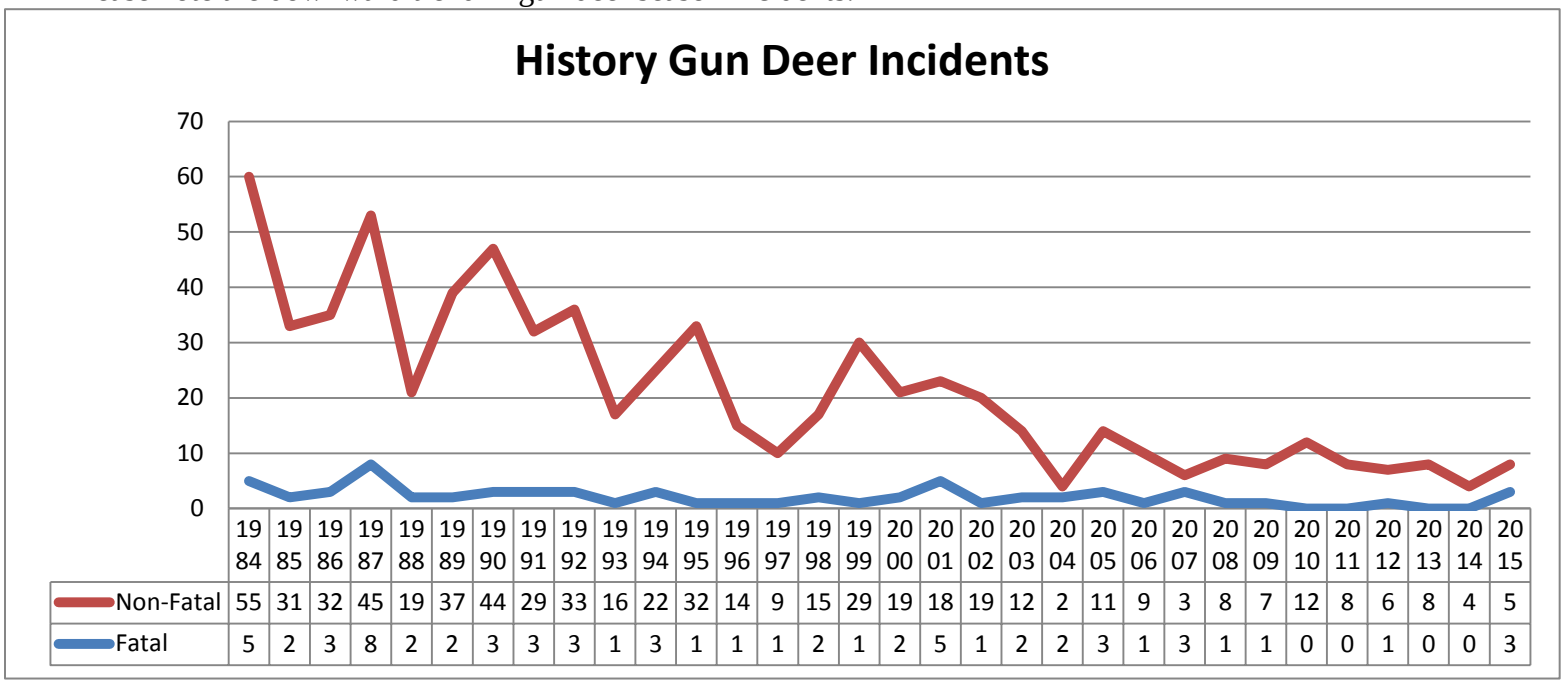
Figure 11

2015 Deer Season Summary

Female participation in hunting continues to be a popular trend. Approximately 36% of the 25,000 hunter safety graduates in Wisconsin were female, not including archery. 11% of the licensed deer hunters were female and 31% percent of first time gun deer buyers were female which is at a steady increase.

Figure 12: Wardens conduct thorough investigations to learn what happened in hunting-related shooting incidents in order to prevent such incidents. The program's lengthy historical data and inquiries into the circumstances of each incident is used to make effective modifications to the hunter education curriculum, target media outreach efforts and train volunteers as well as department staff.

Please note the downward trend in gun deer season incidents.



	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Non-Fatal	55	31	32	45	19	37	44	29	33	16	22	32	14	9	15	29	19	18	19	12	2	11	9	3	8	7	12	8	6	8	4	5
Fatal	5	2	3	8	2	2	3	3	3	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	5	1	2	2	3	1	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	3

Figure 12

Summary of incidents during gun deer season:

- 8 total incidents
- 3 fatalities
- 3 of the 8 incidents involved a self-inflicted injury (38%), the other 5 incidents involved two individuals, shooter and victim (62 %)
- 4 incidents involved members of the same hunting party
- 1 incident involved separate hunting parties
- 2 of the incidents involved deer drives in 2015
- The average age of the shooters involved was 26
- The 9-day gun deer incident rate was 1.31 incidents per 100,000 licensed hunters with 3 fatalities

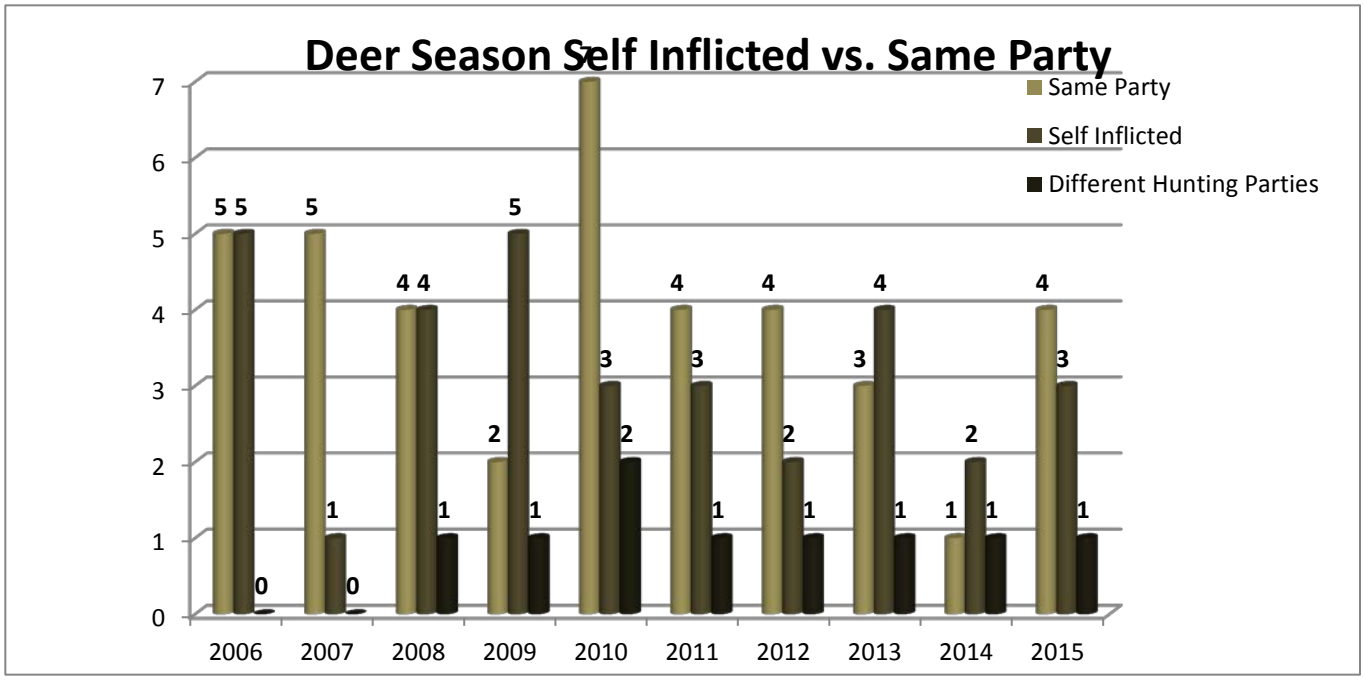


Figure 13

Figure 13: 3 of the 8 incidents involved a self-inflicted injury (38%), 4 involved hunters of the same party and the other incident involved two individuals in different hunting parties.

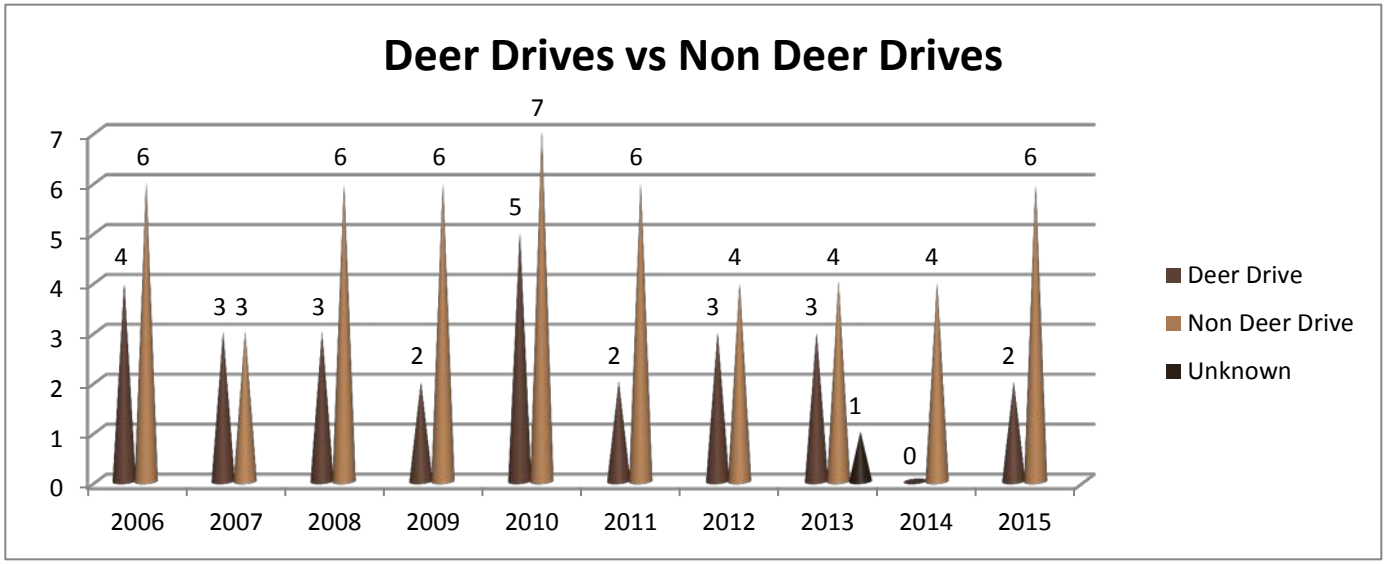


Figure 14

Figure 14: 6 of the 8 incidents were *not* related to deer drives (75%)

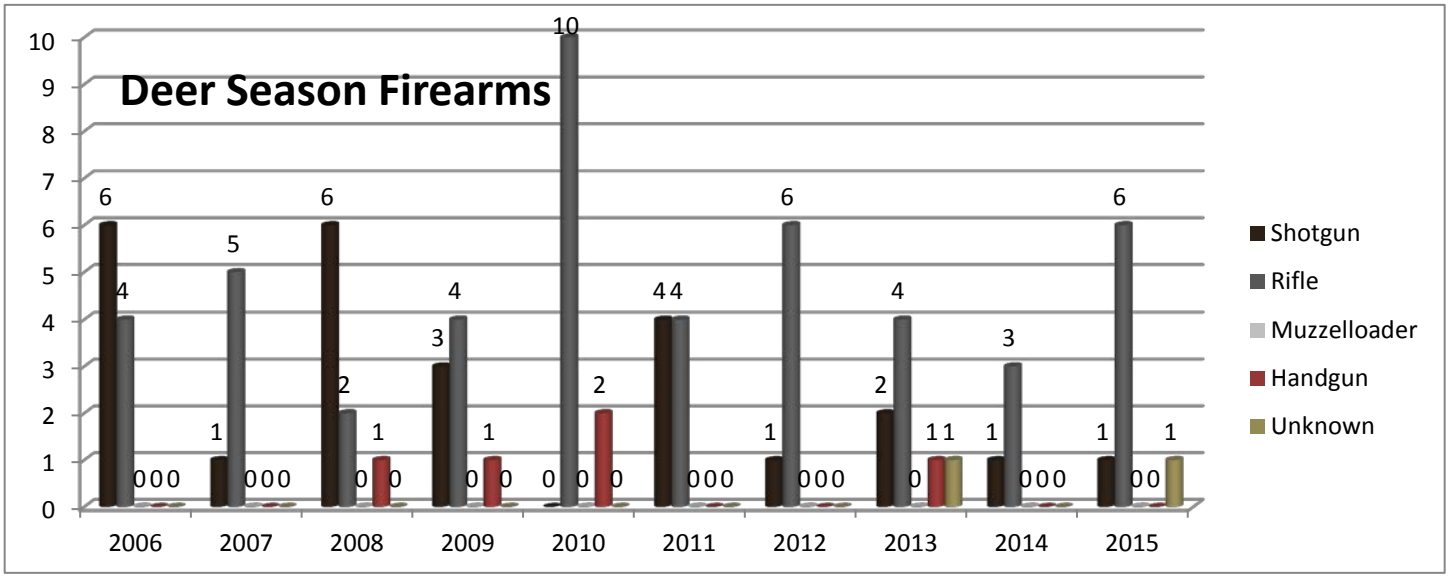


Figure 15

Figure 15: Type of firearms involved: (6) - Rifle, (1) – Shotgun, (1) - Unknown

Summary:

To summarize, there were 23 total hunting incidents during the 2015 hunting season. 5 of the 23 incidents were fatal. Hunting is a safe activity in Wisconsin and getting safer all the time however, there were a couple of serious concerns noticed in 2015.
Two major causes for incidents were shooter's failure to positively identify the target and victim out of sight of the shooter. It's not a good enough reason to take a shot when a hunter only thinks they are seeing a legal target; they must know and be certain the target is legal and safe. Having a safe zone of fire and safe backstop is equally important as knowing your target. Planning your hunt and hunting your plan is essential; know where your hunting partners are at all times.

- The point of always identifying your target and beyond before shooting needs to be reinforced by all hunters.

- 43% of the incidents were self-inflicted which means the muzzle was pointed somewhere towards the hunter's body; this is 3% over the 10 year average.

Even as we congratulate ourselves we must continue to improve on this record because as we all know any incident is ONE too many. In 2015, Wisconsin finished just below the 10-year average of 26 incidents per year.

It is expected Wisconsin will continue that downward trend. Incidents caused while hunters were either moving or shooting at moving game increased the propensity for hunting incidents. This emphasizes the importance of knowing and practicing the 4 basic rules of firearm safety every time a hunter handles a firearm.

Remember the slogan: "**Safe Hunting is No Accident.**" We can continue to be safe IF all hunters follow these 4 simple rules:

Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.
Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
Be certain of your target and what's beyond.
Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot.

Untracked Incidents and Treestand Safety:

Every year, media outlets have reported on hunter deaths or injuries throughout the season. These reports are often related to death by natural causes or injuries from treestand falls. The WDNR does not track or include these events in statistical reports.

Treestand safety is a mandatory part of the Wisconsin Hunter Education program with emphasis on the use of:

- safety harnesses
- 3 points of contact
- use of a haul line (to raise and lower) unloaded firearms and bows
- life lines
- safety inspections of treestands

"Stay Connected"
"Live to Hunt Again"

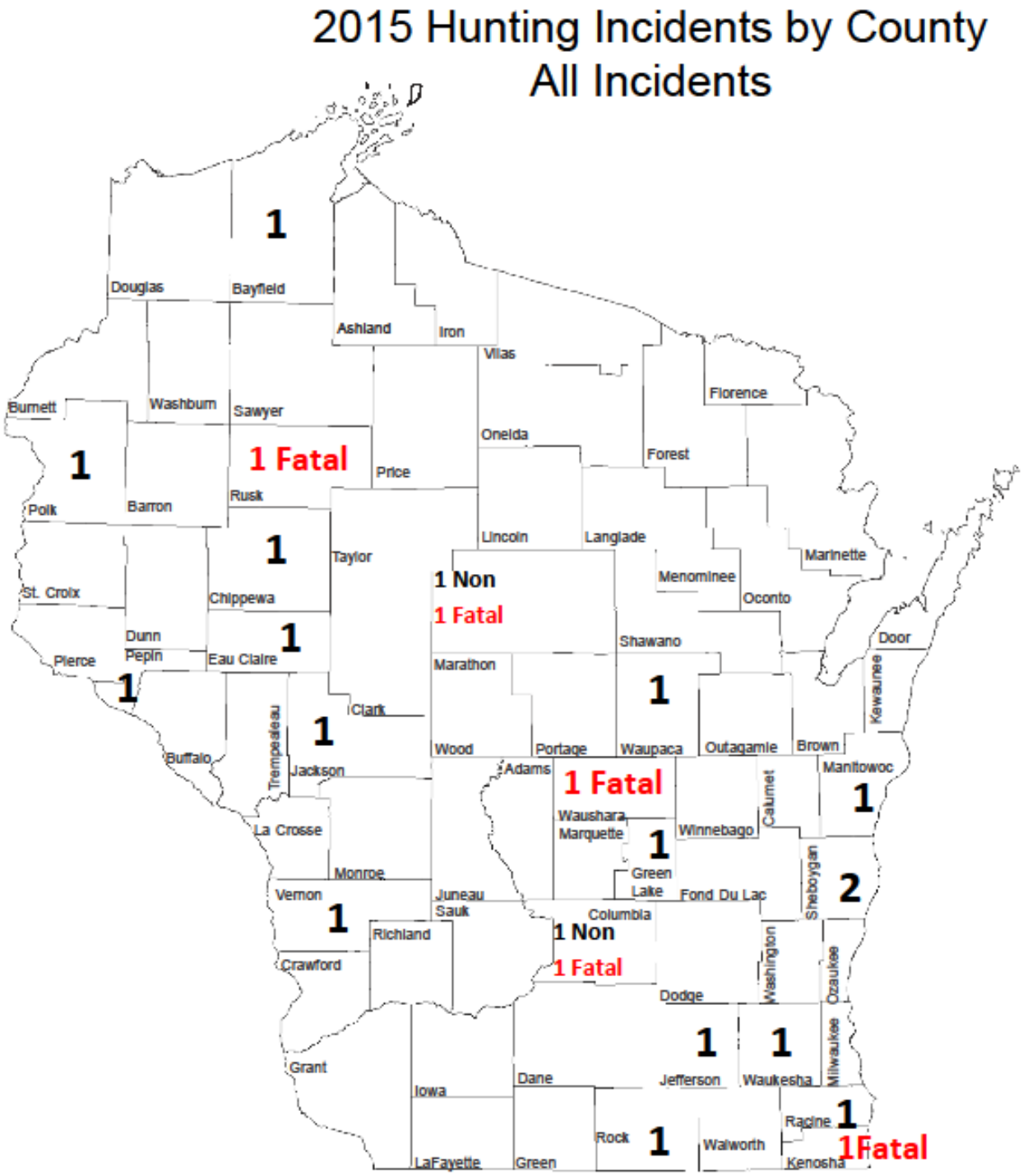
Our goal is to get all hunters to safely climb in and out of a treestands while staying connected from the ground all the way up. The program also maintains a web page specific to treestand safety and public service announcements and media releases. http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/hunt/treestand.html

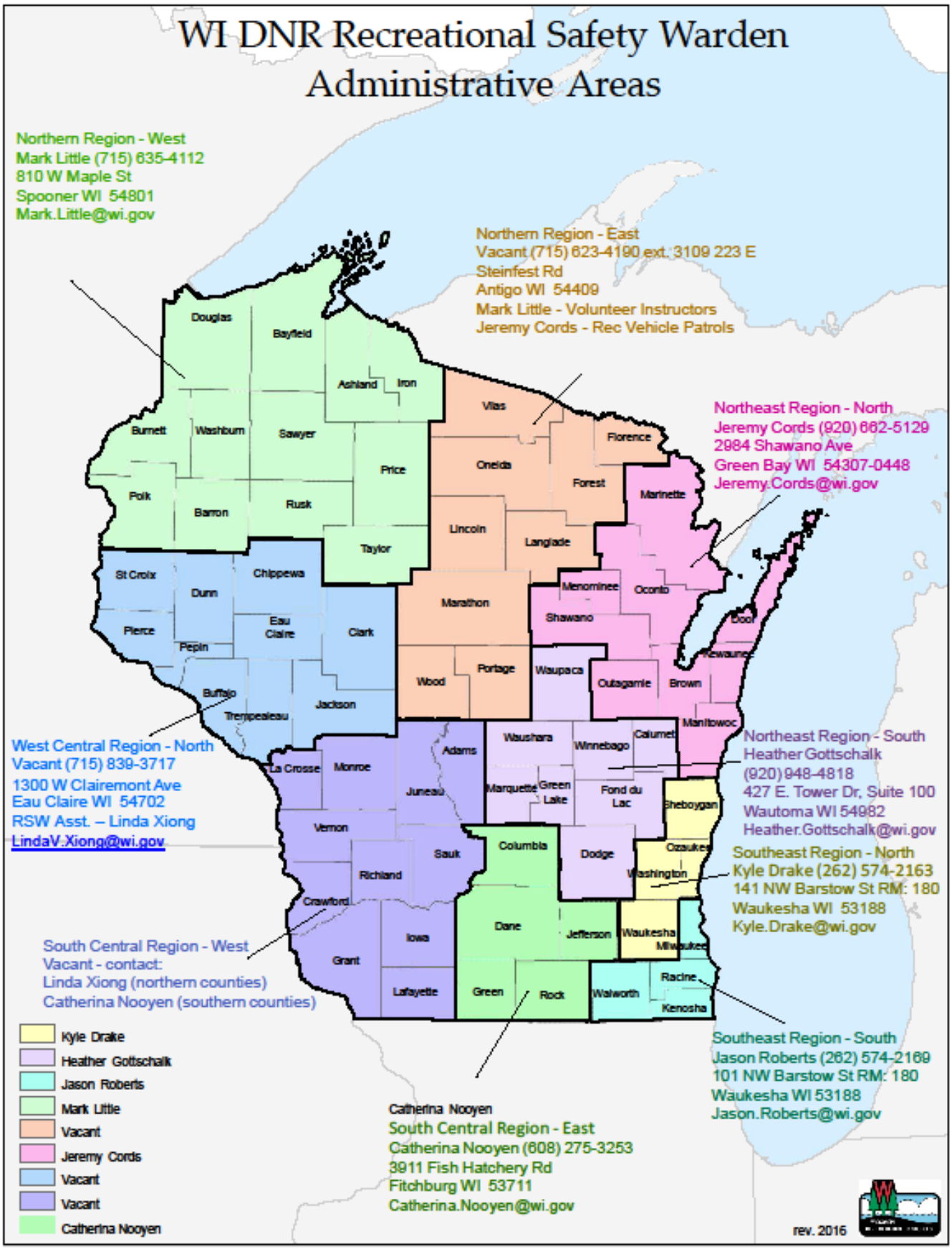
Volunteer Instructor Corner

The volunteer instructor corner is a central place for all the resources you'll need as a certified safety program instructor. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the site and share it with other instructors you work with.

You will find links to forms, policies, lessons plans and a direct link to the new Instructor Dashboard on the Go Wild Website; https://gowild.wi.gov/. This site is for DNR certified volunteer recreational safety instructors. Only active, certified instructors can access the site to register a course, manage courses, review instructor history such as classes taught, students certified and submit course rosters and fees.

Check it out at http://dnr.wi.gov/volunteer/instructorcorner/



Note: All incidents non fatal unless otherwise stated.

***Treat every firearm as if it is loaded *Always point the muzzle in a safe direction * Be certain of your target and what's beyond *Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot**