

2003 HUNTING INCIDENT REPORT

“What Happens When Safety Isn’t First In The Field”



Colorado Hunter Education Program
Mark Cousins, Acting Hunter Education Administrator

Colorado Division of Wildlife
Bruce McCloskey, Acting Director

Department of Natural Resources
STATE OF COLORADO

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The 2003 Colorado hunting seasons were some of the safest in recent years in terms of the number of hunting incidents. In 1970, the Colorado Legislature mandated hunter education training in Colorado for all hunters born on, or after, January 1, 1949 and the number of hunting accidents or incidents has decreased steadily since that time. In the 1960's, Colorado had an average of 10.1 fatal hunting accidents and 24.2 non-fatal accidents per year. During the 1970's these averages dropped to 4.5 fatal and 18.6 non-fatal accidents. The following decade saw these averages drop again to 2.3 fatal and 16.3 non-fatal. During the 1990's, the averages continued to decline, with 1.3 fatal and 11.1 non-fatal accidents.

In 2003, approximately 560,000 hunting licenses were sold, resulting in millions of hunter recreation days. Colorado hunters reported only seven hunting incidents resulting in injury or death in 2003. There was one additional fatality where a waterfowl hunter, while attempting to rescue his dog from ice, fell in and drowned. While this does not qualify as a "hunting incident" as it did not result from a firearms or archery equipment related injury, it is included as a reminder that safety procedures must be followed at all times. Hunting continues to be one of the safest outdoor activities for both participants and non-participants alike. While the number of hunters in the field continues to increase, the average number of hunting incidents is still decreasing.

It is regrettable that we have to report a single hunting incident, but considering that over one-half million licenses were sold and that hunters spent millions of recreation days in the field in pursuit of game, we are pleased to report only seven hunting incidents that resulted in injury or death. Many of the injuries, five of the seven, were self-inflicted and the other two involved persons in the same vehicle or hunting party.

The intent of this report is to promote hunting and hunter safety by raising the awareness that many of these incidents could have happened to almost anyone. It is hoped that everyone will learn from the mistakes of others and avoid ever having to experience a hunting incident. Hunting safety requires constant attention and concentration – *a moment of carelessness can have a lifetime of consequences!*

To reduce the chance of a hunting incident, always follow these basic firearms safety rules:

- Always treat every firearm as if it were loaded.
- Always control the muzzle of your firearms and do not point it at anything you do not intend to shoot.
- Be certain of your target and what is beyond it.
- Keep your finger off of the trigger until you are sure of your target and ready to shoot.

COLORADO
2003 HUNTING ACCIDENT SUMMARY

ESTIMATE NUMBER OF HUNTING LICENSES SOLD IN 2003 560,000

Fatal Accidents

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Big Game | 2 |
| Small Game | <u>0</u> |
| TOTAL | 2 |

Non-Fatal Accidents

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| BIG Game | 4 |
| Small Game | <u>1</u> |
| TOTAL | 5 |

Hunter's Age (shooter is victim)

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Unknown | 0 |
| 14 or under | 1 |
| 15 to 21 | 0 |
| 22 to 30 | 0 |
| 31 to 40 | 1 |
| 41 and up | <u>5</u> |
| TOTAL | 7 |

Victim's Age (if not shooter)

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Unknown | 0 |
| 14 or under | 1 |
| 15 to 21 | 0 |
| 22 to 30 | 0 |
| 31 to 40 | 2 |
| 41 and up | <u>3</u> |
| TOTAL | 6 |

CAUSES OF ACCIDENTS

| | |
|--|---|
| Dropped Firearm | 0 |
| Hunter Stumbled and Fell | 2 |
| Discharge Firearm In/On Vehicle/Horse | 2 |
| Victim Covered by Shooter/Swinging on Game | 0 |
| Victim Moved in Line of Fire | 0 |

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Loading/Unloading Firearm | 1 |
| Richochet | 0 |
| Careless Handling | 2 |
| Victim Mistaken for Game | 1 |

2003 SMALL GAME NON-FATAL HUNTING ACCIDENTS

| <u>Shooter's Age</u> | <u>Hunter Ed Training</u> | <u>Hunting Method</u> | <u>Victim's Age</u> | <u>Hunter Ed Training</u> | <u>County</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 42 | Unknown No CO HE # | .22 Pistol | 42 | | Weld | 12/17/2003 |

Remarks

Victim was shooting at/to scare coyotes, stuck loaded .22 pistol between legs, shooting self in thigh. Careless handling, loaded firearm in motor vehicle.

2003 BIG GAME FATAL HUNTING ACCIDENTS

| <u>Shooter's Age</u> | <u>Hunter Ed Training</u> | <u>Hunting Method</u> | <u>Victim's Age</u> | <u>Hunter Ed Training</u> | <u>County</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 36 | Yes - OH | Bow & Arrow | | | San Juan | 9/4/2003 |

Remarks

Self-inflicted wound to femoral artery with arrow following a fall by victim. Bowhunter fell, impaling leg with arrow equipped with broadhead. Broadhead severed the femoral artery - causing death due to blood loss.

| | | | | | | |
|----|----------|--------------|----|----------|-------|-----------|
| 44 | Yes - WI | Muzzleloader | 44 | Yes - WI | Routt | 9/20/2003 |
|----|----------|--------------|----|----------|-------|-----------|

Remarks

Victim was shot with Muzzleloader rifle within 50 yards of shooter and in same hunting group. Incident occurred in area of heavy cover before daylight - sound and movement shot. Multiple game law violations.

2003 BIG GAME NON-FATAL HUNTING ACCIDENTS

| <u>Shooter's Age</u> | <u>Hunter Ed Training</u> | <u>Hunting Method</u> | <u>Victim's Age</u> | <u>Hunter Ed Training</u> | <u>County</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 43 | Yes - WI | Muzzleloader | | | Grand | 9/14/2003 |

Remarks

Self-inflicted wound to hand when muzzleloader discharged while being reloaded.

| | | | | | | |
|----|----------|-------|--|--|----------|------------|
| 55 | Yes - CO | Rifle | | | Gunnison | 10/19/2003 |
|----|----------|-------|--|--|----------|------------|

Remarks

Victim and horse injured when loaded rifle in scabbard caught on oak and discharged, wounds to hand and arm. Both victim and horse expected to recover.

| | | | | | | |
|----|----|-------|--|--|----------|------------|
| 60 | No | Rifle | | | Saguache | 10/23/2003 |
|----|----|-------|--|--|----------|------------|

Remarks

60 yr. old male stumbled and hit lever action rifle on handgun in holster causing rifle to discharge. Bullet and rock fragments hit leg with some fragments penetrating the skin. Victim resumed hunting after receiving medical treatment.

| | | | | | | |
|----|----|-------|----|----------|------------|------------|
| 73 | No | Rifle | 13 | Yes - CO | Las Animas | 10/25/2003 |
|----|----|-------|----|----------|------------|------------|

Remarks

Discharge of rifle in vehicle by passenger while attempting to unload while driver being checked by DWM. Bullet deflected off of seat frame and bullet fragments struck 13 yr. old female in back seat - minor scalp wound. Loaded firearm in motor vehicle.

2003 BIG GAME NON-FATAL HUNTING ACCIDENTS

| <u>Shooter's Age</u> | <u>Hunter Ed Training</u> | <u>Hunting Method</u> | <u>Victim's Age</u> | <u>Hunter Ed Training</u> | <u>County</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 8 | No | Rifle | | | Crowley | 10/4/2003 |

Remarks

While taking a break from Pronghorn hunting, a father & son were target shooting. Careless handling of a firearm by the 8 yr. old resulted in a self-inflicted wound to finger when he discharged rifle while cleaning mud from muzzle.

CLOSE CALLS THAT COULD HAVE BEEN TRAGIC

Date

INCIDENT

10/13/2003 Loaded firearm on OHV, male discharged rifle while trying to unload gun in case - round hit tire on trailer, narrowly missing DWM and other hunters

11/3/2003 Careless handling, big game. Male discharged lever action while loading, shooting mirror and window on vehicle.

The above information is not included in totals. Information only.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife Annual Hunting Accident reports indicated for the years 1961 through 1994 the
Average Fatal: 10.1 Non-Fatal: 24.2

January 1, 1970 mandatory Hunter Education stature, florescent orange clothing stature, and loaded firearm in a
motor vehicle statute all went into effect.

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Fatal</u> | <u>Non-Fatal</u> | <u>Total Accidents</u> |
|---------------|--------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 1970 | 9 | 20 | 29 |
| 1971 | 5 | 15 | 20 |
| 1972 | 3 | 32 | 35 |
| 1973 | 4 | 24 | 28 |
| 1974 | 2 | 18 | 20 |
| 1975 | 4 | 21 | 25 |
| 1976 | 5 | 15 | 20 |
| 1977 | 8 | 6 | 14 |
| 1978 | 1 | 17 | 18 |
| 1979 | 4 | 18 | 22 |
| <u>TOTAL:</u> | 45 | 186 | 231 |

AVERAGE: Fatal: 4.5 Non-Fatal: 18.6

| Year | Fatal | Non-Fatal | Total Accidents |
|---------------|--------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 1980 | 6 | 23 | 29 |
| 1981 | 1 | 21 | 22 |
| 1982 | 4 | 19 | 23 |
| 1983 | 4 | 18 | 22 |
| 1984 | 4 | 18 | 22 |
| 1985 | 1 | 16 | 17 |
| 1986 | 1 | 13 | 14 |
| 1987 | 1 | 7 | 8 |
| 1988 | 3 | 14 | 17 |
| 1989 | 0 | 10 | 10 |
| <u>TOTAL:</u> | 25 | 159 | 184 |

AVERAGE: Fatal: 2.5 Non-Fatal: 15.9

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Fatal</u> | <u>Non-Fatal</u> | <u>Total Accidents</u> |
|---------------|--------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 1990 | 2 | 22 | 24 |
| 1991 | 1 | 14 | 15 |
| 1992 | 1 | 20 | 21 |
| 1993 | 3 | 10 | 13 |
| 1994 | 2 | 9 | 11 |
| 1995 | 0 | 16 | 16 |
| 1996 | 0 | 10 | 10 |
| 1997 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| 1998 | 2 | 11 | 13 |
| 1999 | 0 | 8 | 8 |
| <u>TOTAL:</u> | 13 | 123 | 136 |

AVERAGE: Fatal: 1.3 Non-Fatal: 12.3

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Fatal</u> | <u>Non-Fatal</u> | <u>Total Accidents</u> |
|---------------|--------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 2000 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| 2001 | 3 | 9 | 12 |
| 2002 | 0 | 18 | 18 |
| 2003 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| <u>TOTAL:</u> | 6 | 35 | 41 |

AVERAGE: Fatal: 1.50 Non-Fatal: 8.75