

To: Capt. Bobby Mawyer
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

From: Carter F Lewis
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Subject: Concern about ropes being used by some hunters

The DGIF Treestand Safety team has made great progress in the past few years to provide the best possible information and training for the safe use of treestands. It is a pleasure to work with the dedicated people on the team.

I have recently learned of hunters buying ropes from building supply outlets and hardware stores to use as lifelines and prussic for their full body harness systems. I have checked some outlets in my area and have not found ropes that are listed as lifeline or climbing approved by the manufacturer or the outlet. The manufacturers I have researched list their lifeline and climbing ropes as having a working load of 500 pounds or more, with tensile strength of 5000 pounds or more, with a diameter of 12mm or ½ inch. Those ropes are also braided for the use required of them. The ropes listed for prussic use are 7-8mm diameter and have the same load ratings.

The ropes I found in local outlets were listed as 294 pound working load and 2940-pound tensile strength for a 5/8 diameter braided rope. The only size suitable for a prussic was a 7/16 diameter listed as 300pound working load, not strong enough.

I recommend that persons buying rope for life use go to suppliers of rope listed by:
OSHA
Arborist suppliers
Fire, search and rescue suppliers
Treestand Manufacturers Association members whose rope is tested to ASTM Standards
Mountain climbing and Caving equipment suppliers

I am hoping this information may prevent injury or death due to rope failure.