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MAKE BLAZE ORANGE YOUR FALL FASHION STATEMENT

CONCORD, N.H. -- Hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts are encouraged to put on a bright orange article of clothing when they head afield this fall. Wearing a fluorescent orange hat, vest or jacket makes you highly visible, one of several key safety precautions for hunters, hikers and others enjoying the autumn woods. Several hunting seasons are already underway in New Hampshire (see [http://wildnh.com/Hunting/hunting\\_dates\\_and\\_seasons.htm](http://wildnh.com/Hunting/hunting_dates_and_seasons.htm)).

"Wearing blaze orange has definitely been shown to decrease hunting incidents across the country," said Josh Mackay, who coordinates the Hunter Education Program at the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. "It is important for outdoors enthusiasts generally, but especially for hunters, because the overwhelming majority of hunting-related incidents involve members of hunting parties."

Mackay stressed that, along with wearing blaze orange, the top safety rules for hunters are controlling the muzzle of your gun at all times and positively identifying your target -- and what's beyond -- 100 percent of the time.

Overall, New Hampshire has an excellent record for hunter safety, largely attributable to the state's effective hunter education programs. The average number of hunting-related incidents per year has gone down each decade since mandatory hunter education classes became required in the 1970s. The 1960s saw an average of 21.4 incidents per year in New Hampshire. Fewer incidents have occurred each decade since, with an average of 3.4 incidents per year since 2002.

While most hunting-related incidents do not involve non-hunters, it's a good idea for hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts getting outdoors in the fall to think safety as well, by wearing blaze orange, sticking to established trails, and reviewing the hikeSafe guidelines at <http://www.hikesafe.com>. Blaze orange pet accessories are also available.

For more information on dates and details of N.H. hunting seasons, visit <http://www.huntnh.com/Hunting/hunting.htm>