

THE SENATE  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY



EDWARD A. RATH III  
SENATOR, 61ST DISTRICT

March 11, 2022

Hon. Mark Poloncarz  
Erie County Executive  
95 Franklin Street, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear County Executive Poloncarz:

I wanted to take this opportunity to share a recent report from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) regarding safety statistics for this past big game hunting season. The DEC report states that 2021 was the safest year on record and reported ZERO incidents involving youth hunters.

As you know, the 2021 New York State budget gave local legislatures the ability to opt-in to a youth hunting season, which would allow 12 and 13-year-olds to hunt deer under adult supervision. Erie County was one of only two eligible counties to not opt-in to this program and was the only county to have a proposal vetoed.

I would strongly encourage you to review the attached report summary and take it in to consideration if the legislature takes steps to opt-in to the 2022 season.

Erie County is home to a strong and vibrant hunting community. Hunters have proven to be responsible mentors who take safety very seriously. It would be a shame for Erie County youths to miss valuable learning experiences and opportunities to participate in activities available to nearly every other 12 and 13-year-old across the state. In addition, these youths will receive an education in responsible hunting and safety practices that will serve them well for the rest of their lives.

I would hope that you respect the findings of this report and strongly consider these facts when making future decisions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Rath".

EDWARD A. RATH III  
State Senator – 61<sup>st</sup> District

cc: Erie County Legislature

Enclosure (2)



# HUNTING SAFETY STATISTICS

## 2021



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

### 2021 has lowest number of incidents in New York's History

2021 marked the fewest number of hunting-related shooting incidents (HRSI) since New York's hunter safety program was signed into law in 1949. The purpose of the new law, the first of its kind in the country, was "...to lead the reduction of hunting accidents in the field." In the late 1940s the average hunting incident rate was 22.3 per 100,000 hunters. The current 5-year average is 1.5 incidents per 100,000 hunters. It is encouraging to see that hunters are taking measures to ensure the safety of themselves and others while afield.

Of the 9 incidents that occurred in 2021, 2 were self-inflicted and 7 were two-party firearm incidents. Of those 9 incidents, 8 of the shooters involved received their hunting certificate prior to the online course being offered, and 1 had no hunter education or hunting license. A new hunting regulation went into effect in 2021 that extended legal shooting hours for big game to 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset. None of the deer hunting incidents occurred during the new extended hunting hours. Also, no incidents resulted from the new law allowing 12- and 13-year-old licensed hunters to hunt deer with a rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader or crossbow.

Also new for 2021, hunters pursuing deer or bear with a firearm (and those accompanying them) are required to wear a minimum of 250 sq. inches of solid fluorescent orange or pink material above the waist visible from all directions, or a hat, vest or jacket with no less than 50% of the exterior consisting of solid fluorescent orange or pink and visible from all directions. Unfortunately, the single fatality that occurred in 2021 involved a hunter who was not wearing any fluorescent orange or pink, was mistaken for game, and was shot by a hunting partner.

Please note that the 2021 figures are compiled from preliminary reports and are NOT final. Final investigation reports take months in some cases. In some of the incidents reported the shooter was participating in an illegal act.

This report includes only hunting related shooting incidents involving firearms, bows or crossbows. It does not include all incidents and fatalities related to hunting (such as heart attacks).

	2019	2020	2021	5yr avg.
<b>Total Incidents*</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>
Fatal	1	3	1	1.8
Non-fatal	11	19	8	13
Self-Inflicted	5	13	2	6.3
Two-Party	7	9	7	8.6
<b>Big Game</b>				
Bear	0	0	0	0
Deer	7	10	4	6.8
<b>Turkey</b>				
Spring	1	1	1	1.4
Fall	0	0	0	0
<b>Small Game</b>				
Rabbits	0	1	0	0.4
Squirrels	0	4	1	1.4
Upland Bird	1	1	2	1.2
Raccoon	0	0	0	0
Fox/Coyote	1	1	1	1
Waterfowl	2	4	0	2.2
<b>Firearm</b>				
Shotgun	8	10	5	7.4
Rifle	3	5	4	5.2
Handgun	1	0	0	0.6
Muzzleloader	0	4	0	0.8
Crossbow	0	2	0	0.4
Bow	0	0	0	0.2
Air Gun	0	1	0	0.2

<b>Hunting-Related Shooting Incidents 2012-2021</b>			
Year	Big Game	Small Game/Other	Total
2012	14	10	24
2013	10	9	19
2014	9	13	22
2015	13	10	23
2016	8	5	13
2017	6	13	19
2018	8	5	13
2019	7	5	12
2020	10	11	22
2021	5	4	9
<b>10-year Average</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>17.6</b>

For more information, or to sign up for email updates from NYSDEC, visit our website:

[www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)

COMM. 7M-13

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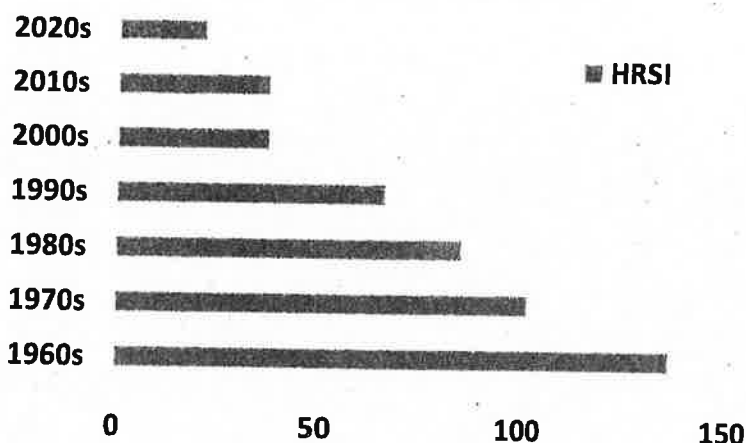
## The Stories behind the Statistics: Hunting Related Shooting Incidents 2021

Preliminary descriptions of incidents as of 2/10/2022. Some incidents are still under investigation. Some incidents involve a shooter that was participating in an illegal act. Fatalities are listed in red.

### FORMAT FOR 2021 DESCRIPTIONS:

*Date (mm/dd) - County - Brief description of incident - Age of shooter - Years of hunting experience of the shooter - Victim orange notes if the victim was wearing fluorescent orange or pink - Violations notes if the incident involved an illegal act.*

Hunting-Related Shooting Incidents 1960-2021  
Average Incidents per Year by Decade



### SMALL GAME HUNTING & NONGAME

**1/24** - Chenango. Shooter was coyote hunting when he slipped on ice and discharged a round into his foot. Age: 66. Hunting experience: 50 yrs. Victim orange: N/A. Violations: No.

**5/21** - Sullivan. Shooter was shooting at a squirrel in his front yard and discharged a round of bird shot, striking a person walking on the road. Shooter had no hunting license and had never taken hunter education. Age: 63. Hunting experience: N/A. Victim orange: N/A. Violations: Yes.

**10/28** - Erie. An unknown shooter was pheasant hunting and discharged one round of birdshot, striking the victim with one shot pellet. Age: Unknown. Hunting experience: Unknown. Victim orange: Yes. Violations: No.

**12/04** - Chautauqua. While grouse hunting, the shooter discharged two rounds of bird shot, hitting his hunting partner in the leg with shot. Age: 20. Hunting experience: 9 yrs. Victim orange: No. Violations: Yes.

### TURKEY HUNTING

**5/1** - Orange. Shooter discharged one round at a turkey, striking and injuring two individuals in his hunting party with bird shot. Age: 61. Hunting experience: 40 yrs. Victim orange: No. Violations: Yes.

### BIG GAME HUNTING

**11/07** - Saratoga. Shooter discharged one round over a highway while deer hunting, striking a car and injuring two people. Age: 62. Hunting experience: 48 yrs. Victim orange: N/A. Violations: Yes.

**11/20** - Otsego. Shooter slipped on uneven ground while deer hunting and discharged one round, hitting another member of his hunting party. Age: 55. Hunting experience: 41 yrs. Victim orange: Yes. Violations: No.

**11/25** - Ontario. Fatality. Shooter discharged one round from an elevated stand, striking his hunting partner, who was tracking a deer. Age: 61. Hunting experience: 45 yrs. Victim orange: No. Violations: Yes.

**12/10** - Greene. Firearm was leaning against an ATV and started to fall. Victim reached for it and shot himself in the foot. Age: 69. Hunting experience: 50 yrs. Victim orange: N/A. Violations: Yes.

***New York is thankful for the dedication of thousands of Hunter Education Program volunteer instructors whose efforts since the program began in 1949 have resulted in hunting being an activity that is safer than ever.***

