



# WASHINGTON STATE LOGGER SAFETY INITIATIVE

Keeping Washington loggers safe.

## Keep your Distance or Lose your Life

A 45-year-old tree faller died after being struck by a 20-foot tree section that had broken from a tree felled by a co-worker. The victim was working a strip of the logging site down slope from two other cutters. A co-worker (another tree faller) cutting in the adjacent area, felled a tree measuring approximately 115-125 feet in height. As the tree fell, it struck one or more standing trees and broke into several sections. The top section of the felled tree struck the victim as he was trying to escape. The local emergency medical rescue unit was summoned via radio and responded to the incident scene, but the victim died from the injuries sustained in the incident.

Even though this tragic accident took place nearly 17 years ago, this kind of event has been repeated too many times. In the past year and a half, three timber cutters have lost their life when they did not maintain a working distance of at least two tree lengths apart from other workers and were struck by falling trees.

- All tree cutting operations should adhere to the principle that a distance of at least two tree lengths should separate adjacent occupied work areas.
- A “pre-job safety plan” should be in place for the cutting site and the plan should be reviewed prior to each day’s cutting.
- Training and education in logging operations should be a continuing process for skills development and for the understanding of safe methods and practices in the logging industry.
- A timely warning should be given prior to felling each tree.
- The felling of a cut tree should be controlled by a proper under-cut and back-cut, leaving hinge wood of sufficient thickness to guide the tree during its fall.
- A well-defined escape path should be planned so a quick retreat can be made to a safe area “out of harm’s way” from a falling tree.
- The area surrounding partially cut trees which are still standing, should be clearly identified (or marked if possible) to warn all persons of the potential for those trees to fall in an uncontrolled manner.

Logging continues to be one of the high hazard industries in the state for serious injuries and deaths. Always implement and apply safe work practices to ensure that every worker returns home unharmed.