

## Choker Setter Dies When Struck by Log

**Task:** Setting chokers

**Occupation:** Choker setter

**Release Date:** April 26, 2015

A 21-year-old choker setter died when the skyline tail hold failed and a log in a turn being yarded fell and struck him. He had 1½ years logging experience; all of it was with his employer. He was considered to be a skilled choker setter by the hooktender who supervised him. On the day of the incident, a four-man rigging crew with a hooktender, rigging slinger, and two choker setters were working on a 70% slope about 1,500 feet below the landing. The yarder was a telescopic tower. The skyline stretched about 2,000 feet from the yarder to the tail hold. The tail hold was two maple trees tied together with a twister for extra strength. A motorized dropline carriage was being used. The rigging crew had previously sent two turns to the landing on this road. They set a third turn of three tree-length logs using 20-foot chokers. The rigging slinger blew the go-ahead whistle to take the turn to the landing. The victim, the other choker setter, and the rigging slinger were standing about 30-40 feet behind the turn and were facing it as it began to be pulled out of its lay and up to the carriage. The turn had moved about 50 feet when the tailhold failed and the skyline dropped about 40-50 feet. As the turn fell, the skyline moved 15-20 feet sideways in the direction of the crew. The longest log, a 65-foot 28-inch diameter fir, swung towards the crew. They began to run away from the falling, swinging log. As the victim was running, the choked log hit the ground and spun around, striking him in the head. Inspectors determined that the tail hold was properly rigged, but the two trees had shallow roots and they were both pulled out of the ground under the weight of the turn.



Incident scene showing the 65 ft. log that struck the choker setter. The log was one of three logs in a turn being hauled to the landing when the skyline tailhold failed, causing the logs to fall.

### Safety Requirements

- Employees must move away from the turn so as to be above or behind the turn in the clear. They must remain on their feet and face the turn before the go-ahead signal is given. See [WAC 296-54-577\(5\)](#).
- Employers must provide safety training for each employee. See [WAC 296-54-507\(1\)](#).

### Recommended Safe Practices

- Failing to be “in-the-clear” is the number one cause of death and serious injury to rigging crew members.
- To be “in-the-clear,” employees must know what hazards to expect, how unexpected events can trigger hazards, and how to put enough space or barriers between themselves and the likely hazards.
- Crew members are not “in-the-clear” unless they are out of the swing radius of the longest log in the turn. This means the length of the log, plus the length of the choker and dropline, plus any deflection that could occur.

### Resources\*

- Free workplace safety and health consultations are available from L&I at: [www.SafetyConsultants.Lni.wa.gov](http://www.SafetyConsultants.Lni.wa.gov)
- Free video from Labor & Industries, “Be Safe in the Woods” at: <https://fortress.wa.gov/lni/shrl/VideoDetails.aspx?VideoID=1490>
- Accident Prevention Program for Logging Operations. Washington State Logger Safety Initiative at: <http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/TrainingPrevention/Programs/files/LSILoggingOperationsSampleAPP.doc>

\*These internet links have been shortened for publication and will not operate in your web browser as written. To access these resources, please go to the SHARP publications page at [www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/Pubs/](http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/Pubs/), click on *Logging*, open this document and follow the links from there. Prepared by Randy Clark and Christina Rappin, WA State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), WA State Dept. of Labor & Industries. The FACE Program is supported in part by a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH grant# 5 U60 OH008487-09).

