

Timber Cutter Struck by Cut-Up Tree Left Standing and Not Marked

Task: Felling timber

Occupation: Cutter

Release Date: September 25, 2015

On March 25, 2015, a 54-year-old cutter died when he was struck by a falling tree that another cutter had cut and left hung up. The victim, an experienced cutter, was working with a fellow cutter to open up a strip. The site was a timber sale consisting of pulp and saw log timber; it was thick and tight with timber in some places and wide open in other areas. The site was on the edge of a habitat area where trees were being felled tree length so that they could be removed with minimal damage to the area. The victim was prepping an area around a tree before felling it. As he was cutting off a stump, he was struck by a falling larch tree that had been left hung up. The victim was found by the other cutter, who attempted CPR, but to no avail. The county coroner determined that he died of head and neck injuries. The larch had been undercut and backcut improperly. It was cut clear off except for a small portion of the sap wood and was left standing limb-bound with another tree. The larch could have been felled along with the tree it was limb-bound with, but it was not. It was not marked as a danger tree. The victim was not notified by the cutter that the tree was hung up. Site conditions would have prevented the victim from seeing the hung-up larch, as it was 78 feet from where he was struck to the tree's stump. Also, the stump was hidden by debris from the falling process of the adjacent previously cut strip.



Incident scene showing the hung-up larch tree that fell and struck the victim as he was cutting off a stump.

Safety Requirements

- The person in charge of cutting crews must regularly inspect the work of the cutting crews and is responsible to ensure that the work is performed in a proper and safe manner. See [WAC 296-54-539\(8\)](#).

- Lodged trees must be clearly marked and identified by a predetermined method and all persons in the area must be instructed not to pass or work within two tree lengths of the trees except to ground them. See [WAC 296-54-53910\(18\)](#).

- Trees with face cuts and/or backcuts must not be left standing unless all the following conditions are met: (a) The cutter clearly marks the tree; (b) Discontinues work in the hazardous area; (c) Notifies all workers who might be endangered; and (d) Takes appropriate measures to ensure the tree is safely fell before other work is undertaken in the hazardous area. See [WAC 296-54-53910\(16\)](#).

Recommended Safe Practices

- Train cutters: a) in both the hazards and safe work procedures of cutting operations that they are not familiar with; b) how to safely fall hung-up trees; c) to never work in front of a cut-up tree.
- Do not work under hung-up/cut-up trees.

Resources*

- Free workplace safety and health consultations available from L&I at: 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 Cutting Operations. Washington State Logger Safety Initiative at: www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/TrainingPrevention/Programs/files/LSICuttingOperationsSampleAPP.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/, 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 OH008487-10).

Logging Safety Training Attendance Roster

Date: _____ Subject: _____ Location: _____

Trainer: _____ Trainer title: _____

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)	SIGNATURE	COMPANY	JOB TITLE

Safety training attendance roster reviewed by _____ date _____