

WASHINGTON STATE LOGGER SAFETY INITIATIVE

Keeping Washington loggers safe.

Quarterly Cutting Safety Training: Safely Falling Hung Up Trees

July 1, 2017

A cutter with 25 years of experience was falling a tree-length job. The ground was not too steep and the timber averaged 21 inches in diameter. He had previously fallen a snag to get the hazard on the ground. The felled snag was laying out in front of the tree he was about to fall. When he fell the tree, it hit the snag that was on the ground and a 5-inch diameter 12-foot-long chunk of that snag flew back and struck the cutter. He was knocked out and when he came to, he radioed another cutter who was 2.5 tree-lengths away for help. The other cutter came over and assisted in getting him to the hospital. He was hit in the head and shoulders with the snag chunk but not hospitalized.

Safety Requirements and Safe Practices

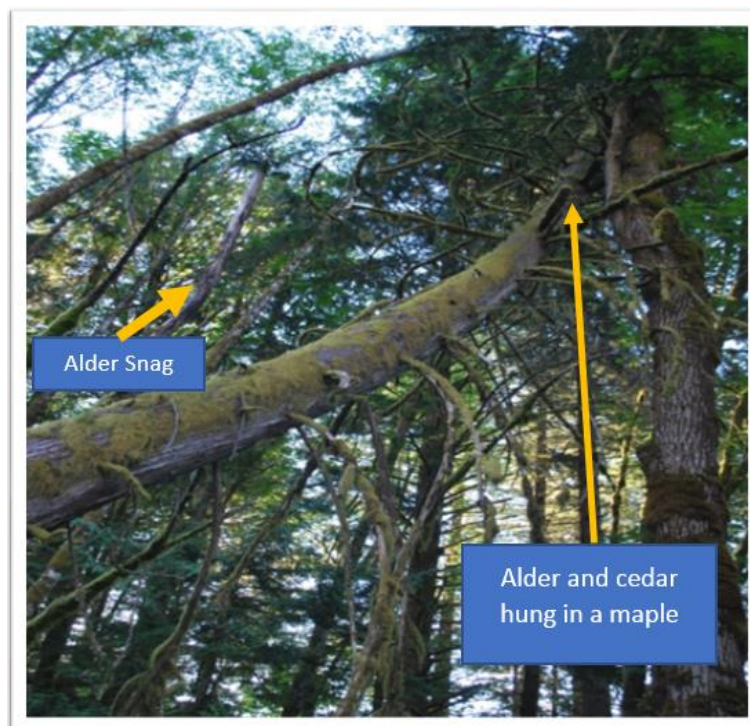
- Cut away windfalls, logs or other debris that could be thrown back towards you by the falling tree.
- Check for debris in front of the tree being felled. If debris can be thrown back at you, clear the debris prior to falling.

Timber cutters face falling difficulties each day at work. It is critical that they are taught skills to read hazards and safely abate them. This training is based on two scenarios and is designed to start conversations with your crew about addressing each situation safely. The methods written here are just one example of different methods to use.

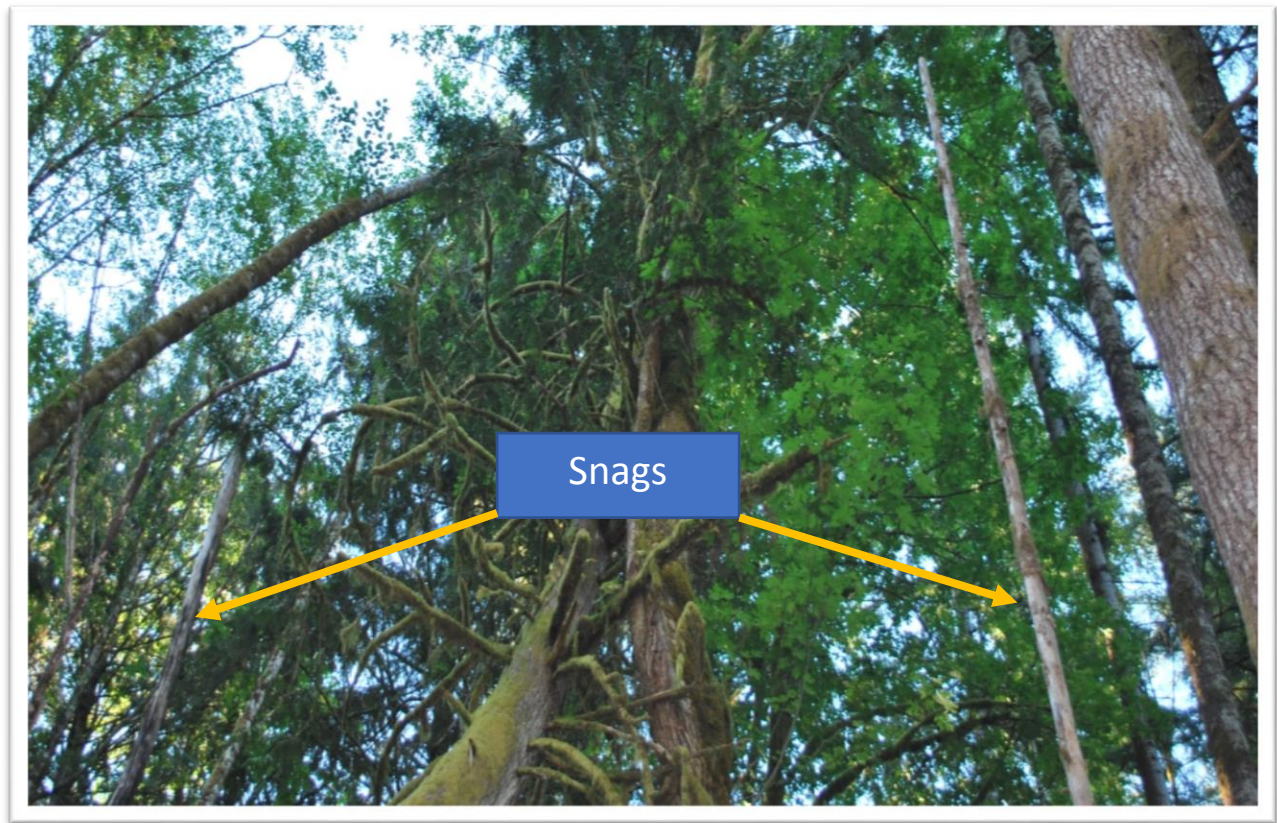
Some instances (as in picture below) have multiple hazards. The first scenario hazard shown is of a cedar tree hung in a maple tree surrounded by multiple alder snags. The second scenario hazard is of an alder snag wind-thrown into a maple. Both situations have complex hazards that need to be assessed prior to falling the tree(s).

**See the LSI Accident Prevention Program for more information on overcoming falling difficulties.*

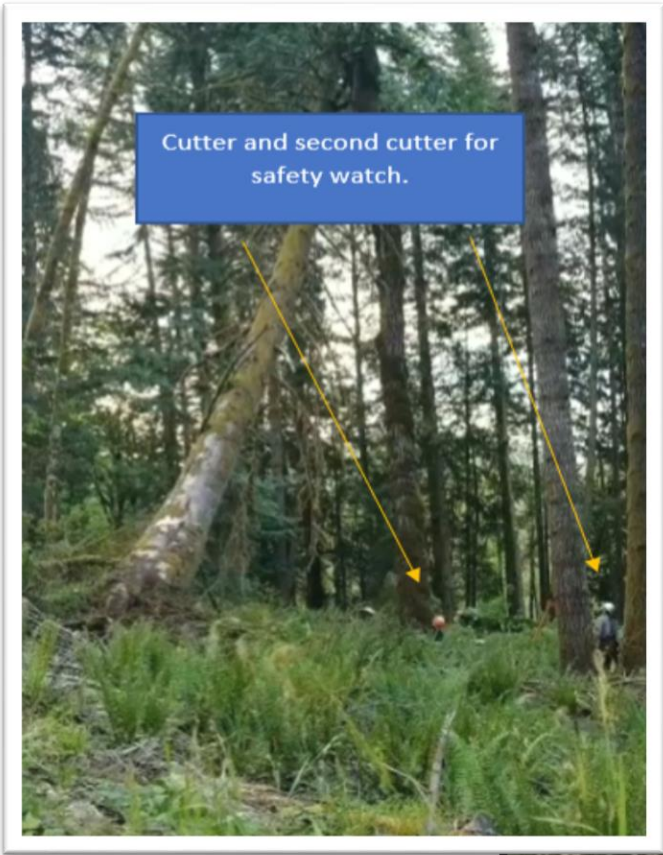
Scenario 1



Another angle of the same hazard trees



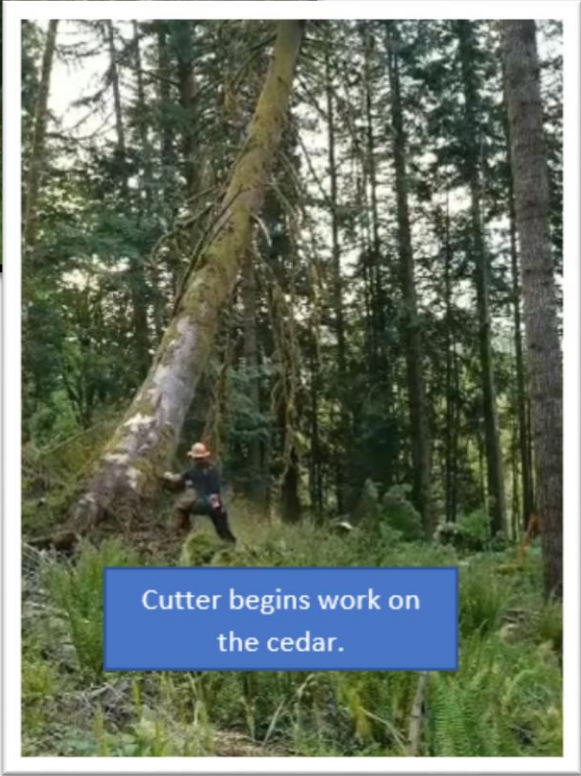
- 1) When walking the unit prior to falling, or while the cutter is walking their strip, identify the hazards.
- 2) Assess the situation with others to determine the safest way possible to ground the hazards.
- 3) If possible, have a machine remove the hazard trees.
- 4) Create a plan of action and have another experienced faller working with the cutter.
- 5) Inspect all safety gear and equipment.
- 6) Make sure your chain is sharp.
- 7) After the cutter has opened the strip up to the hazard, and has a safe place to fall the trees, reevaluate.
- 8) Confirm the abatement plan during your reevaluation.
- 9) Ensure the second cutter is in a safe place and you have visual communication with them.
- 10) Clear escape path.
- 11) Fall the alder snags.
- 12) After each face cut and before the back cut ensure the second cutter has not moved.
- 13) After each tree, assess the situation again with the second cutter to ensure nothing has changed.
- 14) Clear escape path for the maple that the cedar is hung up in.
- 15) Check to make sure second cutter is in a safe place.
- 16) Bore cedar to inspect for rot. * See LSI Accident Prevention Program for more information on boring.
- 17) If the cedar is clear to cut, begin. In this situation, the cedar was cut from the far side first.



Cutter and second cutter for safety watch.



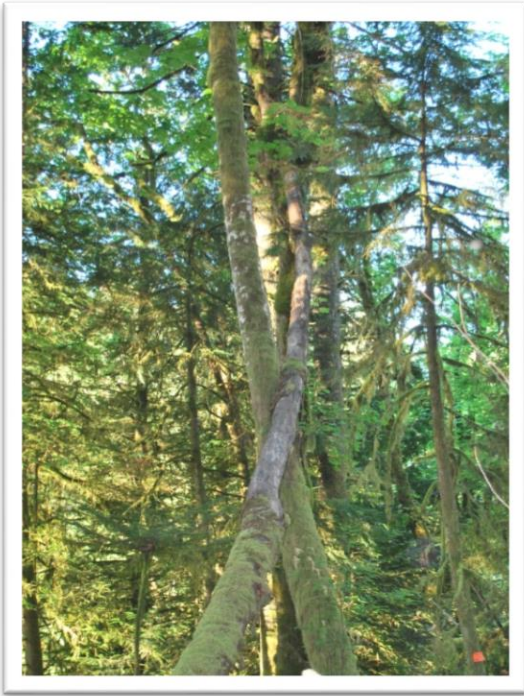
Second cutter assesses the tree again.



Cutter begins work on the cedar.

Scenario 2

In this situation, an alder snag has been wind-thrown into a maple tree. As in the first situation, if it is possible, have a machine abate the hazard. If that is not feasible, assess the situation with multiple people and create a plan of action. The hazard trees in this scenario are an alder snag windthrown into another tree, side pressure from a standing green alder, and the maple that the snag is blown into.



- 1) When walking the unit prior to falling, or while the cutter is walking their strip, identify the hazards.
- 2) Assess the situation with others to determine the safest way possible to ground the hazards.
- 3) If possible, have a machine remove the hazard trees.
- 4) Create a plan of action and have another experienced faller working with the cutter.
- 5) Inspect all safety gear and equipment.
- 6) Make sure your chain is sharp.
- 7) If possible, have a machine remove the hazard trees.
- 8) Create a plan of action and have another experienced faller working with the cutter.

- 9) Read the tension on the tree and clear an escape path on the safe side (downhill in this instance).
- 10) Ensure the second cutter is in a safe location and you have visual contact with them.
- 11) Buck the alder snag off close to the root.
- 12) Find a drive tree and fall it onto the alder snag so the hazard is grounded.

**See the LSI Accident Prevention Program for more information on heavy leaners and tension*

Questions/conversation for cutters:

- 1) How would you handle this situation and why?
- 2) What is your company's policy for cutting in situations like these?
- 3) Can you share an experience for everyone to learn from?