

FORESTRY BULLETIN

Fatal Accidents in Logging, Forestry and Tree Work for the Year Ending 30 June 1995.

Eleven people lost their lives in forestry work during the past year. Unfortunately, a large number of these fatalities were caused by lack of knowledge of, or not sticking to, the work practices and safety advice contained in the safety codes for forestry, which were developed as minimum standards by the industry and OSH, to help make forestry work a safer occupation.

Here's What Happened:

Logging:

- A feller was crushed by a dead snag (spar, keg) he was felling as his saw went through more quickly than anticipated due to a central rotten section. The snag slid off the stump and struck the feller.
- A tree, uprooted by a wind gust, struck the skid worker from behind as he measured logs on the skid.
- A large rimu tree fatally injured a tractor driver as he failed to recognise the hazard and drove into the path of the falling tree.
- While returning to the felling face along a track, a dozer rolled 1½ times when the track edge collapsed. The operator either jumped or was thrown out and was partially pinned by the machine. He was not wearing a seat belt.
- A skidder rolled six times down a 60° slope. The operator suffered fatal head injuries as he was thrown around in the protective structure. He was not wearing a seat belt.
- An operator got out of his machine to help with skid work. When finished, he placed his chainsaw into the grapple loader cab, the weight of the saw activated the drive pedal, the machine moved forward and the operator's legs

were caught by the track of the machine which ran over the operator. The master hydraulic control lever was inoperable as it was not connected.

- A feller unsuccessfully tried to fell a tree. He went forward of the intended direction of fall of the tree and started to fell another tree. A wind gust caused the first tree to fall and strike him.
- A feller was working forward of the intended direction of fall of two cut-up trees. He had felled a further tree and was cutting the stump lower to the ground when one of the cut-up trees fell and struck him.

Tree Work:

- A worker was felling trees under power lines when he was struck from behind by a disturbed dead tree. The worker was severely injured and died in hospital some time later.

Land Clearing:

- A self-employed farmer was developing land for farming. The area had scattered bushy totara trees which the farmer felled as development took place. He was felling a tree on a slope. The tree went backwards and then slid downhill striking the farmer as he attempted to leave in his work area below.

Firewood Gathering

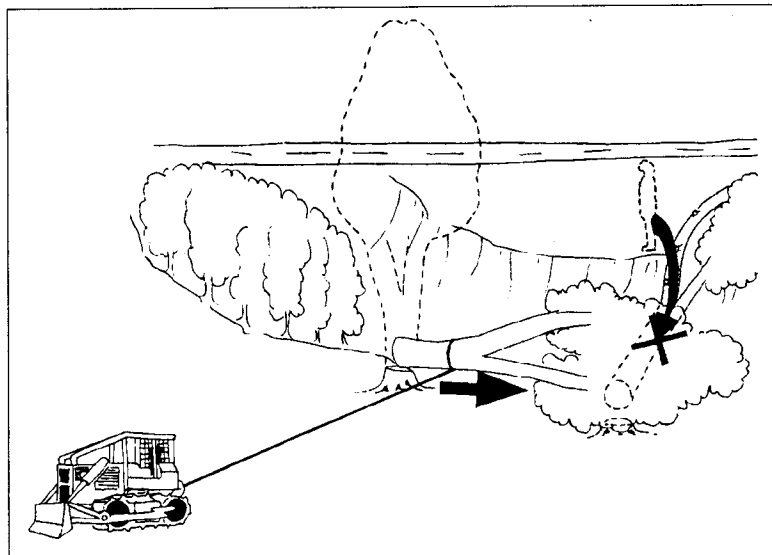
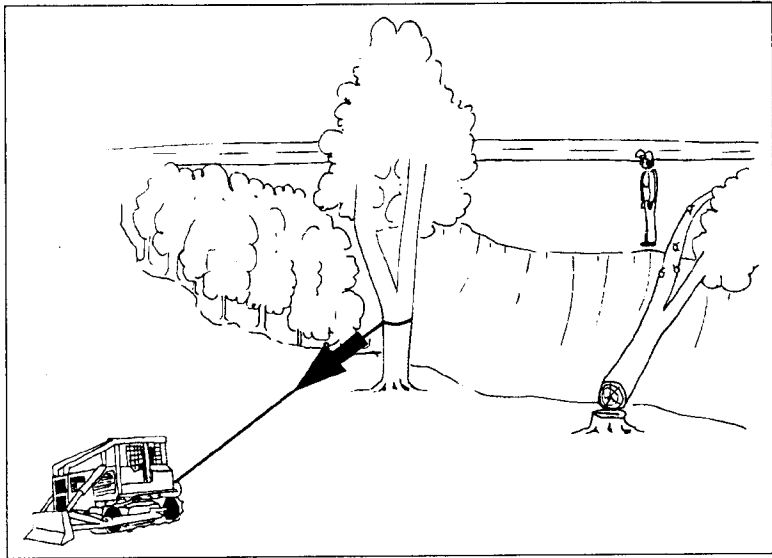
- With the assistance of a tractor, the deceased was felling a heavily branched large pine tree against the lean. He was using a small saw and was unable to accurately determine the depth of the cuts. There was inadequate holding wood for the task and the tree screwed off the stump and struck the deceased.

Worker Walks into Path of Falling Tree

A worker, curious that a tree being pulled had not fallen, walked into its path as it fell in the wrong direction.

What Happened:

A logging gang was attempting to back-pull a double-leader to protect a small section of native trees in a park-type situation. One leader was taken out and work proceeded to back-pull the remaining tree. A pulling rope from the tractor was placed around the tree trunk. A check was made to see that the worker who was trimming the felled section was in a safe position and then felling and winching of the standing tree commenced. Unbeknownst to the feller and tractor operator, the trimmer, wondering why the felling was taking so long, thought he may be able to assist and moved away from his work area towards the standing tree. As the tree was winched, it fell sideways from the intended direction of fall and the trimmer was struck by the head branches.



Accident Cause:

Obviously, in this instance, the trimmer, by moving from his safe situation, placed himself in a very dangerous situation and caused the accident — in fact this accident could well have been a fatality. However, the tree did not go in the intended direction of fall and this was a contributing factor.

Prevention

The basic steps for back-pulling are outlined in Section 22 of the *Safety Code for Forest Operations: Part 3 — Logging* and failure to observe some of these may have contributed to this accident.

1. The rope should be secured as high as practicable. The higher the rope is, the more control there is on the pull.
2. Adequate holding wood should be retained. The tree is being felled away from its natural lean and adequate holding wood ensures that the tree will not fall in the wrong direction.
3. If the tension is not held continually or the pull is stopped prematurely, the tree may break sideways.