

FORESTRY BULLETIN

The Dangerous Business of Felling Trees

Part Two: Ways of Reducing Fatalities and Serious Harm Accidents

Ensure that all protective clothing and equipment required is present, properly maintained and used by employees at your worksite.

1. Objects falling into work area (33%)*

- Look at the tree as you approach it—you may see a hazard that is not visible from your work area directly under the crown.
- Don't forget to examine adjacent trees. They may be interlocked by branches or vines with the tree you are about to fell or have material such as dead tops, cone clusters or broken branches that may dislodge, if disturbed, and fall into your work area as, or after, the tree falls.
- Prepare the work area and escape route as necessary.
- Watch the tree as it starts to fall for any dislodged material as you move along your escape route.
- Keep watching for any falling material even after the tree has hit the ground. Adjacent trees which may have been touched will still be swaying and may dislodge or throw material into the work area.
- Do not move to the stump area until you have completed your safety check. Fallers have been struck by material and killed or badly maimed by moving forward too soon to cut off the sloven or start trimming.

2. Trees bouncing or sliding off stump and hitting faller (14%)

- Make sure you have an adequate work area and a well-planned escape route.
- Before commencing felling, look forward in the direction of fall and identify any hazard such as stumps, logs or ground undulations, that may cause excessive movement or sliding back once the tree is felled.
- Avoid felling into standing trees.
- Avoid felling directly uphill.
- Do not stand or move directly behind the direction of fall.
- Watch the tree carefully as it falls and you move along your escape route.

3. Hung-up and cut-up trees (14%)

- Use any machinery on site that can assist in the operation.
- Always seek assistance in bringing hung-up or cut-up trees to the ground. Fully discuss the steps to be taken to bring the tree to the ground.
- Do not move forward of the direction of fall.
- When pushing or pulling with a machine, be aware of any material or top likely to break off and fall other than in the intended direction of fall of the main tree.

* Figures in brackets are the percentage of total accidents reported while felling trees.

- Hung-up trees are likely to move in unexpected directions depending on the amount of wood or roots holding them. Make a thorough examination and watch carefully as pressure is applied to bring them to the ground.
- Be particularly careful when dealing with dead trees or spars as these are sometimes likely to break, even with minimum pressure.

4. Chainsaw kickback (10%)

- Using proper operating techniques will reduce the likelihood of kickback.
- Make sure all safety features (chainbreak, mitt) are operable. Check the operation of your chainbreak at regular intervals
- Maintain the chain to the manufacturer's recommendations as to tension, sharpening and depth gauge settings and use the correct bar and chain combination.
- Be especially careful when clearing light material from around the tree as this can easily be caught in the chain.
- If cutting branches off the base of a tree to allow clear access for felling, work in an anticlockwise direction and try and keep the trunk between the saw and yourself.
- Avoid using the bar nose for cutting.
- Use extreme caution when re-entering a previous cut.
- If there is any doubt as to the lean of the tree, a wedge should be inserted into the backcut and driven home as soon as practicable to avoid pinching of the chain. Pinching can cause kickback.
- Never use the chainsaw above shoulder height.

5. Access (7%)

- Wear footwear that gives good support to the ankles. Lace-up types should be securely laced at all times.
- Spiked footwear should be worn.
- Do not wear worn or slippery-soled footwear.

- Wear clothing that fits fairly closely about you.
- When planning and preparing your escape route, identify and remember hazards that might be of danger as you use the route.
- When moving to another work area, look for loose materials, vines, holes, undulations, banks or slippery ground. Identify any hazards and select a safe route.
- If walking on recently-felled trees and tops, place the foot at the junction of the branch and trunk to avoid loose or thin bark.
- Hand-held equipment should be carried so that it can be thrown clear in the event of a slip or a fall.

6. Strains (5%)

- Bend your knees and not your back.
- Do not overreach.
- "Stand tall" (erect) if practicable, as you shift working positions.
- Add flexibility to your back by doing this exercise 3-4 times a day:
Stand erect;
Place hands in small of back;
Bend backwards to curve lower spin;
Hold briefly and then relax to erect;
Repeat 10 times.

The above exercise is ideal before you start work to help make your back a little bit more flexible.

7. Trees felled by another worker (4%)

- People not assisting with the felling operation unless supervising, under training or training others or authorised by the person in charge, shall remain at a safe distance of at least twice the length of the tallest tree being felled. This is "the two tree-length rule" and is a simple, effective way of preventing felling trees on other people.
- Always make sure this area is clear before you start felling.