

# Forestry Bulletin

## Plant Operating—Skidder Safety

Operating plant was the next most dangerous job in logging to felling trees. This year there have been two skidder fatalities. Let's look at skidder operating safety.

The primary reason for fatalities in skidder operations is being thrown out at rollover and either being crushed by the machine or striking something hard and unforgiving. **Of those people killed in recent mobile plant rollovers, 17 out of 21 would have survived if they had worn a seat belt.**

### Buckle Up and Survive

In a study carried out on skidder operators, a lack of experience and operating beyond the skill limits were identified as the two leading causes of skidder rollovers. **Skidders are specialist machines and should only be driven by competent operators.**

Let's have a look at some of the causes of the fatal and serious harm accidents and ways of taking precautions to reduce them. The precautions listed are very simple because the cause of fatalities and serious harm accidents in skidder operating are very simple.

#### Causes

#### Precautions



#### Rollovers due to loss of control at excessive speed

Small obstructions on skid track causing bounce and loss of control.

Rollovers while travelling on formed roads due to bounce or oversteering.

Operate the skidder at a speed that is safe and reasonable for the conditions.

If practicable, set speeds or gears for travel on formed roads. If you double your speed, you increase the rollover chance four times.

#### Rollovers while winching or turning at sharp angles

Fast line speeds or sharp fleeting angles causing rollover especially when breaking out a heavy drag or when the drag gets caught up.

Sharp turns loaded causing rollover.

Turning sharply on a cross slope resulting in rollover.

Try and avoid pulling at sharp angles to the fairlead. Keep line speed down, at least initially. Do not overload.

At a sharp turn, drop the drag and winch up after the turn.

Back down and then drive skidder up into position. This ensures a better centre of gravity.

## Causes

## Precautions



### Rollovers due to ground conditions

Operating too close to banks, track edges, and on unconsolidated material or fill.

Turning down hill off tracks to shortcut or reach logs.

Backing into a dangerous position especially down gully sides or guts to reach logs.

Operating on slopes that are too steep for the safety and comfort of the machine or operator.

Disturbing logs, rocks or roots on slopes that roll into the work area.

Turning while operating on a cross slope and rolling over.

Rolling back on the breaker-out below the machine while operating on a slope.

Pay particular attention to machine positioning, especially at breakout. Stay on stable ground or part of track.

Don't shortcut between tracks. If a log is out of reach, use a rope extension.

Stay in a position where the machine is stable at breakout. Pull rope or add extension to increase reach.

Planning must properly match machines and topography. Hazards must be identified and controls in place before work commences. Do not at any time operate on slopes that are beyond your skill level.

Never work below an object that may fall or roll into the work area.

Riding onto even small obstructions, such as stumps and minor ground undulations, can cause a sudden change of centre of gravity, resulting in a rollover.

### Brake failure

Regular maintenance to ensure that brakes hold the machine on any slope it operates on. Assist machine stability by backing into a stump, rock or log. Lower and dig in blade.



### Skid accidents

Driving onto skids at speed and either hitting other logs with the drag or causing the drag to swing and hit skid workers.

Approach skids at reduced speeds. Make sure skid workers are aware of your approach. Avoid loose material on skid. Keep skid work area as clean as practical.

**Protective canopies survive rollovers. Don't get thrown out at first roll. Buckle up and live!**