

Let's Reduce Felling Accidents

The most common cause of tree felling accidents is from material falling into the work area from the tree being felled or from neighbouring trees. Some of the material may be sitting in trees or broken off during the felling. Lacerations and bruising are the most common injuries from falling material but when the tree slides back or kicks up, fractures and of course fatalities, are the most common.

Material falling into the work area

- Look at the tree and its neighbours as you approach it. You may be able to see loose material or interlocking branches, cone clusters, broken branches or dead tops that are not evident from the work area directly underneath and may dislodge as the tree falls.
- Prepare the work area and escape path to a 45 degree angle to the rear.
- Watch the tree and neighbours as it starts to fall for any material being dislodged.
- Keep watching for falling material even after the tree has hit the ground. Neighbouring trees which have been touched will still be swaying and may dislodge or throw material into the work area.
- Do not move to the stump until you have finished your safety check. Fellers have been struck by material by moving forward too quickly to cut off the sloven or start trimming.

Trees bouncing or sliding off stump

- Make sure you have a well prepared, adequate work area and planned escape route.
- Before commencing felling, look forward in the direction of fall and identify any hazards such as stumps, logs, slash or ground undulations that may cause the tree to move sideways or slide back once the tree is felled.

- Avoid felling into standing trees or directly uphill.
- Use accepted methods of scarfing and saw cuts, and maintain adequate hinge wood to guide the direction of fall.
- Do not stand or move directly behind the direction of fall.
- Keep watching the tree as you move along your escape route.

Hung-up and cut-up trees

- Always seek assistance in bringing hung-up or cut-up trees to the ground. Fully discuss the steps to be taken.
- Use any machinery on site that can assist in bringing the tree to the ground.
- Do not move forward of the direction of fall.
- When pulling or pushing with a machine, be aware of any material or top likely to break off and fall other than in the direction of fall of the main tree.
- Hung-up trees are likely to move in unexpected directions depending on the amount of wood or roots holding them. Make a careful and thorough examination and watch carefully as the pressure is applied.
- Be particularly careful when dealing with dead trees or spars as these can break even with a minimum of pressure.