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SAFETY ALERT

06-S-7

WIND BLOWS LODGED TREE ONTO LOGGING EMPLOYEE

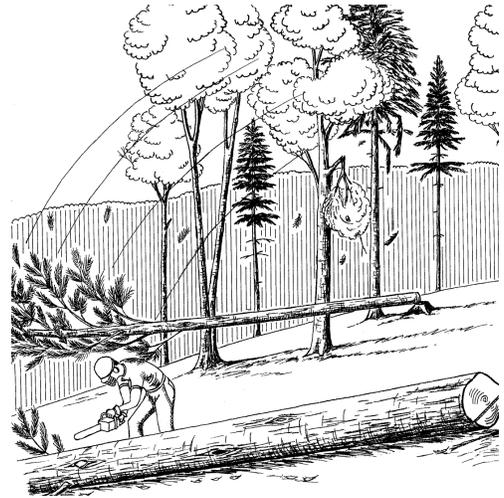
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www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/06-S-7.html

BACKGROUND: On a midsummer day in the Appalachians, an employee was felling and trimming trees with a chain saw in a mixed pine-hardwood stand. The weather was hot with variable cloudiness and gusty winds, and the terrain was rolling.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS: The 22-year-old employee was an experienced chain saw operator and was considered fully trained. He had been working for this employer for nine months. The employee seemed to be a careful worker and was wearing a hardhat, gloves, saw chaps, and safety boots. He had no physical disabilities and no history of accidents.

UNSAFE ACTS AND CONDITION: The employee felled a 10-inch-diameter pine, but it lodged against another pine. He began to trim a felled pine nearby that was lying at a 90-degree angle from the direction of fall of the lodged tree. The employee assumed that a hardwood tree, growing close to the lodged tree, would provide interference and prevent the lodged tree from being able to fall toward him.



ACCIDENT: Suddenly, a strong gust of wind lifted the top of the lodged pine tree away from the tree on which it was leaning. The tree moved upright far enough for it to roll around the top of the hardwood tree and fall directly toward the employee. He was completely unaware of what was happening.

INJURY: The top portion of the tree struck the employee and fractured or damaged six vertebrae in his back and broke several of his ribs. His left leg was also broken in the accident. Although the employee's spinal cord was not severed, it was expected that from six months to a year of rehabilitation would be necessary for him to recover enough to resume normal activities. He was not expected to be able to return to logging, however.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:

- 1) Lodged trees should be flagged with tape as "killer trees," and all personnel should keep at least "twice tree height" away from the base of the tree until an operator in a protected cab can bring it down.
- 2) Always assume that the very unlikely may happen, as in this case.
- 3) Manual tree felling is always dangerous. Train employees to recognize and avoid potential hazards and to exercise extreme caution and alertness at all times.

Reviewed by:

Rick Meyer

Appalachian/Southeastern Region Manager

Please follow equipment manufacturers' recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.