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## SAFETY ALERT

07-S-3

### SAWYER WORKING TOO CLOSELY TO “SET-BACK” TREE

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[www.forestresources.org/MEMBERS/serpub/07-S-3.html](http://www.forestresources.org/MEMBERS/serpub/07-S-3.html)

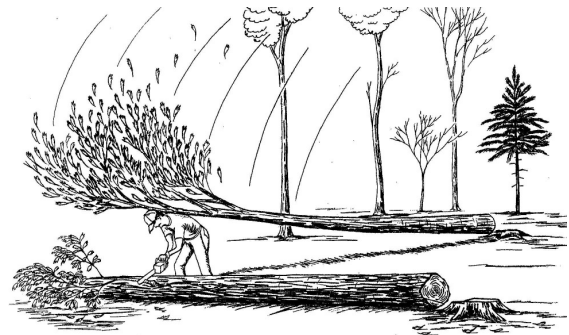
**BACKGROUND:** A timber cutter was felling and limbing hardwood sawtimber trees on an autumn morning in the Southeast.

**PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:** The sawyer had approximately five years of logging experience. He was not wearing any personal protective equipment. No one on this crew had completed a state logger training and education program.

**UNSAFE ACTS & CONDITIONS:** The sawyer completed a face cut and a backcut on a 26-inch-diameter yellow poplar tree, but the tree merely “set back” on the stump and did not fall. The sawyer was able to extract his saw from the tree, but he did not use a felling wedge to help push the tree over. He informed two skidder operators and another sawyer that the tree had been cut through but had not fallen. A skidder operator then told the sawyer that he would push the tree over with his skidder after he returned from the landing. The rest of the crew stayed away from the danger tree, but the sawyer returned to the area and began delimiting a tree he had felled earlier that was within the striking range of the set-back tree.

**ACCIDENT:** The logging crew heard the sawyer beginning work again, and then they heard the loud crash of a tree falling. The sawyer’s chain saw immediately fell silent.

**INJURY:** The logging crew rushed to the area of the set-back tree and found that it had fallen over. The top portion of the tree, at a point where forked branches were approximately 8 to 10 inches in diameter, had struck the sawyer across the back of his neck and head and killed him.



### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:**

- When felling trees manually, be sure to leave adequate holding wood as a hinge to guide the tree’s fall. Do not extend the backcut beyond the face cut.
- Use wedges as necessary to guide a tree’s fall.
- Remove hung trees, set-back trees, and other danger trees with a skidder or mechanical means before continuing work within two tree heights of any danger tree’s base. If the tree will not immediately be removed by mechanical means, mark the area with flagging and alert all other crew members to maintain the same distance.
- Don’t let impatience lead to bypassing of common-sense safety.
- OSHA requires sawyers, like all logging employees, to be fully trained for their work. Training must include instructions on directional felling, hazard recognition/avoidance/abatement, and the use of personal protective equipment. Employers should verify and document employees’ skills.

*Reviewed by:*

Rick Meyer

Appalachian/Southeastern Region Manager

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