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 Source: Washington State Department of Labor & Industries



**BACKGROUND**

On a winter day in the Pacific Northwest an equipment operator trimming brush alongside a logging road died after he was apparently pulled into a rotating disc used to cut brush. He was using an excavator with a disc cutting attachment on the boom.

**PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

The victim was an experienced equipment operator. He was working alone.

**UNSAFE ACTS AND CONDITIONS**

The engine of the excavator was idling. The 400-lb cutting head had power to it and was rotating just above idle. At some point, the victim left the operator’s seat of the excavator and approached the rotating cutting disc attached to the end of the boom.

**ACCIDENT / INJURY**

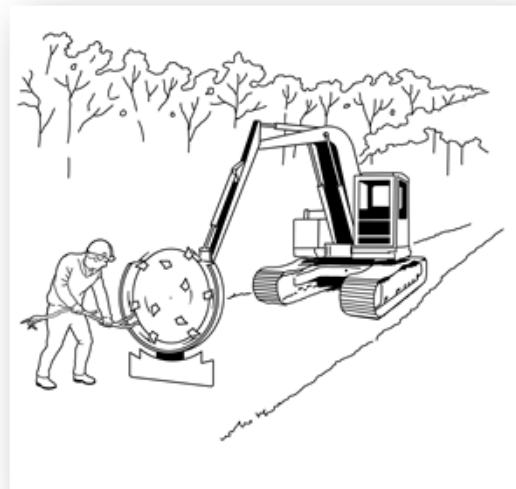
It appears the victim may have grabbed a tree branch stuck in the cutting head and was likely pulled into the rotating disc, suffering injuries that were immediately fatal. Because the victim was working alone, he was not found until three hours after the end of his shift.

Originally published by the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries. [Click here for the Fatality Bulletin.](#)

For a more detailed investigation report of this incident: [Incident Investigation](#)

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTIONS**

- Make sure workers are trained on and use lockout/tagout procedures for machinery they will be using.
- When operating machinery powered by a hydraulic system, make sure all the hydraulics are disabled before getting out of the cab, particularly if the engine is left running.
- Have workers inspect and maintain equipment before using it.
- Train workers who operate equipment like that used in this incident on the hazards posed by getting too close to any rotating disc.
- For employees who work alone, develop a check-in/check-out procedure. A formal plan for checking on employees working alone can be critical for adequate emergency response time.



**Figure 1: Rotating Disc Fatality**



This Safety Alert analyzes an injury in accordance with the chain of events represented by the five dominoes above. Pioneer industry safety experts H.W. Heinrich and Alfred Lateiner developed this accident analysis system to provide a graphic sense of how injuries can be avoided. Their methodology has been accepted by safety professionals worldwide.

**Safety Meeting Report**

*Topic(s) Discussed:*

*Comments / Recommendations:*

*Date:*

*Company:*

*Names of Employees Attending:*

*Meeting Conducted by:*

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

*signature*