



## Report of Near Miss - Skyline

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A near miss occurred on a clearfell operation in northeast England on an area of steep ground which was utilising a Skyline system for whole tree extraction. This system involved winching pole length trees uphill to a small landing area prior to processing with a harvester. The Skyline operator had just pulled up two trees and dropped them at the top of the bank prior to them being picked up by the harvester. The harvester operator removed one of the trees from the ground and began processing but whilst doing so the remaining tree became unstable. The Skyline operator did not notice the remaining stem on the ground as he was paying-out the carriage. At this point, the remaining tree became unstable and began to slip away from the landing area down the slope towards the area where the two chokermen were positioned. The stem narrowly missed both chokermen before coming to a stop at the bottom of the slope (Figure 1). The chokermen informed both machine operators via two-way radio that they were not hurt and all operations were stopped with immediately effect in order to assess the situation.



Figure 1 – Stem lying at the bottom of the steep slope.

As a way of temporarily preventing a reoccurrence, it was agreed that the operation could resume if the Skyline brought one tree up the slope at a time and the harvester handled the tree as soon as it was released by the choker at the top of the slope.

Following a site meeting with all relevant personnel, it was agreed that the size and location of the existing landing area was not sufficient to land multiple whole stems. A new landing area was identified further up the slope which had a larger level area for the Skyline to safely drop and release the extracted stems. Additional to this, a further location for the Skyline landing was also identified further along the slope. Made clear at the site meeting was the importance of maintaining sufficient levels of effective communication in order to always identify the safest workable solution. During this process, the input provided by the operators and their general willingness to improve the site safety was excellent.

### Learned outcomes

1. **PLANNING** – These operations require a high level of planning and all relevant parties need to be involved. Operational challenges must be overcome whilst ensuring safety remains a top priority at all times. It is essential to plan the location and the size of the landing area prior to works commencing and to ensure it is suitable for the scale of the operation.
2. **LANDING SITE LOCATION** – The site for the Skyline landing needs to be carefully thought through. Where planning constraints potentially limit the freedom of the team to operate, consideration needs to be given to early engagement with relevant authorities. Safety considerations must be taken as a top priority.

## SAFETY ALERT



3. COMMUNICATION – It is absolutely necessary for all operators involved in Skyline operations to remain vigilant at all times and communicate regularly with other personnel involved in the operation.