



## Report of Accident - Falling Tree

Ref No: 05.17

Autumn 2017

An area of a Clearfell operation was being felled by Chainsaw operator. Whilst felling a large diameter tree, the operator was just about to move around the tree after finished the felling cut when he noticed another tree beginning to fall behind him. Unfortunately, he did not have enough time to react to the sight of the falling tree and was subsequently struck on the back. Although he was knocked to the ground, the operator remained conscious and began to shout for assistance and blow on his safety whistle. A second Chainsaw operator heard the call and immediately attended the scene. At this point, the injured operator was sat upright against a tree but clearly in some pain from the impact. The second operator contacted the rest of the site based personnel via a two-way radio and informed them of the accident and the casualty was taken by car to hospital. The injured operator was checked over and released later that day with no major injuries other than a bruised back.

On the site, all operations were stopped with immediate effect so that a thorough investigation could take place. The investigation revealed that the Chainsaw operator was struck by a standing dead tree which was located approx. 8 metres away from tree being felled (Figure 1). The investigation could not identify the exact reason that the standing dead tree came down at the same time as the tree being felled.



Figure 1 – Felling area and broken deadwood which struck the operator.

### Learned outcomes

Instances such as this where a small dead tree breaks off its stump and falls onto a Chainsaw operator whilst felling another neighbouring tree are unpredictable. However, this accident highlights the importance of carrying out a thorough inspection of the immediate work area prior to undertaking any felling. This will also include checking to ensure that escape routes are clear and free of any obstructions. Forest Works Managers should also consider this hazard on future operations and the risks that such trees could pose to site based personnel including Chainsaw operators. Should they deem it necessary, such hazards need to be recorded on the site based risk assessment and appropriate methods of controlling the risk identified and implemented.