

Safety Alert

Beware Falling Branches

INSIST ON SAFETY



Two experienced chainsaw operatives had been asked to complete the motor manual felling operations on the steep section of a clearfell site in preparation for skyline operations. The operators had been briefed on the felling, the method of work and the section of the site that was to be hand felled due to the steepness of the site. The trees being felled were large, branchy and of poor form due to the nature of the topography and species.

The operators had successfully felled 12-15 trees without incident or cause for concern earlier in the morning. It was whilst felling a Scots Pine, measuring approximately 25m in height with a 50cm girth at the base, that a forked branch at 12m from the base of the tree, 10m in length with a diameter of 12cm at the tip and weighed approximately 250-300kg fell from the tree and struck the Injured Person (IP).

The IP had identified that there was a forked branch in the tree and did not see anything that would indicate that the tree was unsafe to fell. As the IP had completed the felling cut, the rear of the forked branches started falling vertically top first to the ground where IP was standing. The branch glanced

the IP's hard hat and right-hand shoulder/ right side of body. The IP fell to the ground and the force of the branch knocked him about 2 to 3m down the bank. The tip of the branch broke off when it hit the ground. The other chainsaw operator went to his aid and summoned assistance by running down the slope to other operators who were working nearby.

The IP has sustained several fractures to his right side, together with severe bruising and minor lacerations to his face.

The emergency response procedures worked well and the Mountain Rescue, Ambulance and Air Ambulance were on the scene within 30 minutes of the call.



Learning Points:

1. Be constantly aware of likely danger, especially when the tree begins to fall.
2. Always check and double check branches for any changes no matter how slight whilst felling.
3. Chainsaw operators must have a means of communication with them at all times.
4. Review your emergency plan to ensure that it is up to date and relevant to the part of the site you are working on.
5. Ensure you are wearing the correct PPE at all times.



November 2018 – Safety Alert (SA20) briefing

I have been personally briefed in the contents of this Safety Alert.

Please add any questions relating to this briefing or any other health, safety and environmental matters you wish to raise:

Please add any suggestions on health, safety and environmental matters:

I have been briefed by: _____ My District is: _____

I understand that I am encouraged to submit comment and contribution from this alert.

Signed: _____ Name: _____ Date: _____

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ORIGINAL sheet to be held at District.

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