

## Near-miss

### Tree felling within falling distance of a public road

Part of the worksite was adjacent to a public road, there was also an overhead power line running down the other side of the road.

The agreed work method to protect the road users was to angle the harvesting head and fell the trees away from the road, retaining a tree length 'falling distance' buffer strip.

It was agreed that all the trees within this falling distance 'buffer strip' were only to be felled when suitable traffic control and exclusion measures were in place.

The edge of the 'red-zone' trees (falling distance of the overhead power line) were marked with red paint. The 'red-zone' trees (as the power line was on the other side of the road) were well within the 'buffer strip' retained to protect the public road users. The trees within the 'red-zone' were only to be felled during a pending 'shut-down'.



All these hazards and controls were walked through at the site pre-commencement meeting and detailed in the worksite maps and method statement.

On the day of the incident an operator new to the site was operating the harvester, there was a breakdown in an understanding of the specific site controls and the operator felled up to the paint marked 'red zone' tree line, believing this to be the agreed edge to protect both the power line and the public road users.

No trees fell onto the road on this occasion, however there is a real risk when working so close to a road, that a machine may 'loose' the falling direction of a tree, or loose a 'double', or break out or dislodge a broken top, up-root a whip or knock over a hung up or dead tree, or indeed break a harvesting-head chain and release chain-shot.

The general public, when they can be affected by our work, either adjacent to our worksites or when they enter our worksites, are entitled to all the protection we can afford them.

Ensure 'safe systems of work' are robust, clearly marked on site where required and that the agreed working methods are briefed out to all operatives, including those new to site.

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