

Safety Bulletin

Chainsaw operator - major injuries whilst clearing multiple windblow. January 2014

What Happened?

The worksite had significant areas of multiple windblown stems/storm damaged trees.

The chainsaw operator was attempting to cut a windblown tree off its retaining stump.

Whilst the tree was being cut side tension was released and the tree sprang approximately two and half metres striking the chainsaw operator, resulting in multiple fractures of his thigh bone and fracturing his shoulder.

The operator does not recall how it happened, as it happened so quickly. It is possible that the stem was lying behind another uprooted root plate and when the tension was released it pulled up over the top of the root plate and then struck the operator.



The litter lying under the tree was left by the paramedics after they had stabilised the casualty.

The site emergency response procedure worked well. The casualty was attended by paramedics within half an hour and airlifted to hospital within an hour.

The chainsaw operator is recovering well and we wish him the best in this, however, he is not expected to be able to return to work for eight months.

What can we do?

In areas of windblown/storm damaged trees. In every instance, fully mechanised systems should be considered first, as by far the safest option.

Where site circumstances require chainsaw operators to be involved in the clearance of windblow, City and Guilds/NPTC training and assessments, FISA Guides and the FISA approved Chainsaw Windblow refresher training course, all emphasise the use of machinery (harvesters/forwarders/skidlers) and mechanical aids (hand-winchers) in immediate support of the chainsaw operator.

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