



Beware The Tree Part 1 – Falling Branches

A recent incident involving chainsaw operations has caused us to consider the dangers of falling branches when motor manual felling.

■ Two experienced chainsaw operatives had been asked to carry out motor manual felling 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. 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 while felling a Scots pine measuring 25m in height that a forked branch weighing approximately 300 kg 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 completed the felling cut, the rear of the forked branches started falling vertically top first to the ground where he was standing. The branch glanced the IP's hard hat and right 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 aide 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 ½ hour of the call.



Above: The branch that hit the cutter.



Above: Air ambulance on site.

Remember:

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

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Beware The Tree Part 2

– Hung Up Trees

Hung up trees have been a significant cause of fatalities within our core operations over the years. It is inevitable that trees will become hung up from time to time and they must be dealt with safely.

A hung up tree plan must be developed and included in the risk assessment and discussed at the Pre Commencement meeting. When devising the plan you should consider:

- **The site** – consider the location, is there high public access and/or frequency of third party access.
 - Trees that are unlikely to present a risk to the public due to their position may be taped off and left until they can be brought down safely.
- **The people** – All chainsaw operators must have the correct felling competency to undertake the work.
 - All operatives must understand how hung up trees are to be dealt with on each site and be instructed that they **MUST NOT FELL A TREE INTO ANOTHER TO RELEASE (domino felling)**.
- **The equipment** – there is a range of equipment available that can be used to make hung up trees safe:
 - Machinery – the safest and most efficient way to remove a hung up tree is to use machinery as it removes the chainsaw operator from the danger.
 - Turning bar/strop – either a breaker bar or turning strop can be used to dislodge a hung up tree.
 - Portable winches – there are a variety of winches available. They must be CE marked and designed for pulling. You must also match the strength of the winch to the size of the tree or task being performed.

We **INSIST** that you:

- Discuss and agree how hung up trees are to be dealt with on site before chainsaw felling starts.
- If a tree cannot be made safe by turning then call for help, tape the area off and leave it. Never fell the supporting tree or domino fell to knock the hung up tree down.
- Hung up trees must be considered at the planning stage of the job. Where motor manual felling is required, the work must be planned to minimise the risk of trees becoming hung up. This may include felling patterns and operator selection of trees to reduce the chances of a tree getting hung up.

FISA guide 302 Basic Chainsaw felling and Manual Takedown contains more guidance on how to safely remove hung up trees.

Tilhill Forestry is currently undertaking a review of hung up tree guidance and will issue further instructions on the subject in the coming months.



FISA Safety Guide 302

Basic chainsaw felling and manual takedown

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INTRODUCTION

This guide contains industry agreed safe working practices which should be followed when using a chainsaw to fell and take down trees. It does not cover techniques where the trees are too small to accommodate a sink cut, nor does it include where wire cable, rope or machinery is used in the directional or assisted felling of trees. Where proposed work falls outside the scope of this guide, competent advice should be obtained and agreed safe methods of work implemented. Those agreed safe methods of work should be developed and recorded in a revised, suitable and sufficient site-specific risk assessment. This must be authorised by the Forest Works Manager (FWM) or person in control of the works. Where they are competent to be involved, the Landowner, or his representative, must also be consulted about the changes to the risk assessment/working method. For guidance on PPE, the machine, preparing to work, maintenance, fuelling and starting procedures see FISA Leaflet 301 Using Chainsaws.

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

It should be used by Operators, Landowners, Managers, and Supervisors to ensure safe working, reduce accidents and check operational work practices against agreed industry standards. Individuals using this guide must be adequately trained and sufficiently experienced, along with an ability to correctly interpret and implement good practices relevant to any task or machine described. The contents of this guide may be used to help identify:

- The suitability of a defined safe system(s) of work;
- Compliance with risk assessment and/or method statements;
- Training needs for individuals in conjunction with guide 805;
- This guide can be used as a check list to record relevant information when undertaking site safety checks.

This guide, in conjunction with the chainsaw manufacturer's handbook, should be used as part of the risk assessment process to help identify suitable control measures when using chainsaws.

RISK ASSESSMENT

All risk assessment processes, either Operational or Environmental, must have considered the range of hazards likely to be encountered and adopted sufficient control measures to ensure safe working.

Within this process a designated and named person should be identified e.g. Team Leader, Site Safety Coordinator, Works supervisor. Sufficient risk assessment must be undertaken prior to chainsaw related activities taking place and such assessments should be undertaken at the planning stage and reviewed and implemented at the start of works by competent individuals, incorporating effective communications and an assessment review process between all parties on site.

On sites where cutters need to be out of direct site of colleagues for any time and are therefore at greater risk, then regular radio or phone contact can be a good control, an agreed check in time between the chainsaw operator and designated contact on site should be established, i.e. every 20 minutes. It has to be a site based decision for when work cannot be organised to maintain visual contact. If communications are lost then chainsaw work must stop until communications or visual contact is restored. This should be regarded as a vital part of the Site Specific Risk Assessment (SSRA).

Chainsaw users should be particularly aware of the potential hazards, e.g. of being cut by the saw, hit or crushed by moving timber, the site conditions where work is to be undertaken, the weather operators may be exposed to, noise, vibration, and other work equipment or activities on site.

Relevant and defined emergency procedures, specific to the worksite, should form an integral part of the assessment process.

TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

1. Check that all necessary aid tools and ancillary equipment are available and in a serviceable condition. Aid tools which may be needed include:

- a breaking bar/felling lever;
- a sledgehammer;
- small and large alloy or plastic wedges;
- high lift wedges;
- hydraulic or mechanical felling wedges;
- hydraulic toe jack and/or appropriate tree lifting jack;
- a hand winch complete with handle, cable, pulleys and strops. (Use of the hand winch is detailed in FISA Leaflet 310).

Ancillary equipment which may be needed include:

- Two way radio sets and/or mobile phones for use on sites to ensure adequate communication between chainsaw operator(s) and a designated person on site.

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Remember:

- Hung up trees must only be dealt with in line with methods detailed in training and FISA Guides.
- Chainsaw operators must have the appropriate felling tools and aids with them to deal with difficult trees, including hung up trees and those that have sat back on the cut.
- If hung up trees cannot be safely dealt with immediately, they must be marked off until such a time when they can be brought down safely.
- Always look up into the crown of any tree you are about to fell. Inspect properly for snapped tops, branches or hung up trees.
- Inform the Site Safety Coordinator or FWM should a tree become hung up.

Plans for the Planting Season

As the planting season starts this year make sure you are fully briefed of our requirements including good practice on site:

Plan for Quality

We expect good quality planting delivered to specification. Make sure all your operatives are fully briefed on requirements.

Clear specifications should be set out in work instructions with risk assessments identifying significant health, safety and environmental risks on site and agreed controls.

Treated Trees

You may be handling treated trees – make sure you are clear of how to manage exposure to chemicals: period of exposure, PPE requirements, and the need for Pesticide Records. Do you know which chemical the trees are treated with? Make sure you are briefed and check the COSHH assessment.

Stocking Density

Be clear on what is required. If stocking is 2,700 per ha, how will you check that this is achieved as work is carried out?

Correct Planting Technique

Do all your team know about good plant handling, storage requirements and venting planting trees? What type of cut is required, care of roots when planting, differences between broadleaf planting and conifer? Which side of the mound or plough ribbon to plant and why?

Waste and Disposal

Consider the rubbish that will be created on site and make plans for dealing with it. Store all waste securely on site to protect from wind and avoid contamination of watercourses.

Personal Hygiene

There should be provision of clean water and wipes on site, together with welfare as laid out in the Toolbox Talk Welfare (TT/85).

Plant/Equipment Use

Any ATVs/Quads on site should be used by qualified operators only. Weekly Check books should be available on site for recording inspections. Ground check the routes you're proposing to drive ATVs over and remember ground conditions change with weather and use.

Remember:

It is good practice to start the season with a Pre-planting briefing to the planting teams. See the Tilhill Forestry Briefing Guide [GN/FT/22](#), refer to this together with the Tree Planting FISA Guide ([FISA103](#)).

Toolbox Talks are also available to help brief your team on site:

- Planting and Plant Handling Toolbox Talk ([TT/52](#)).
- Plant handling and planting Pesticide treated trees ([TT/53](#)).
- Slips/Trips/Falls Walking Across Planting, Mounding, Harvesting Sites ([TT/59](#)).

THINK ENVIRONMENT – YEARS TO CREATE, SECONDS TO DESTROY.

A Christmas carol or two from The NHS Information Centre

■ At Christmas time we all like to relax with family and friends and celebrate, but as the statistics show below it can be a very dangerous time, take care and have a great festive break.

Sleigh bells ring...

But does Santa's carriage, never mind Rudolph, conform to current health and safety regulations?

3,680 admissions were due to the rider of an animal or the passenger of an animal-drawn vehicle being injured in a transport accident.

And if you are listening – bear in mind there were 4 admissions for exposure to noise.

When Santa got stuck up the chimney...

Sleigh aside, how about the jolly bearded one's use of climbing equipment?

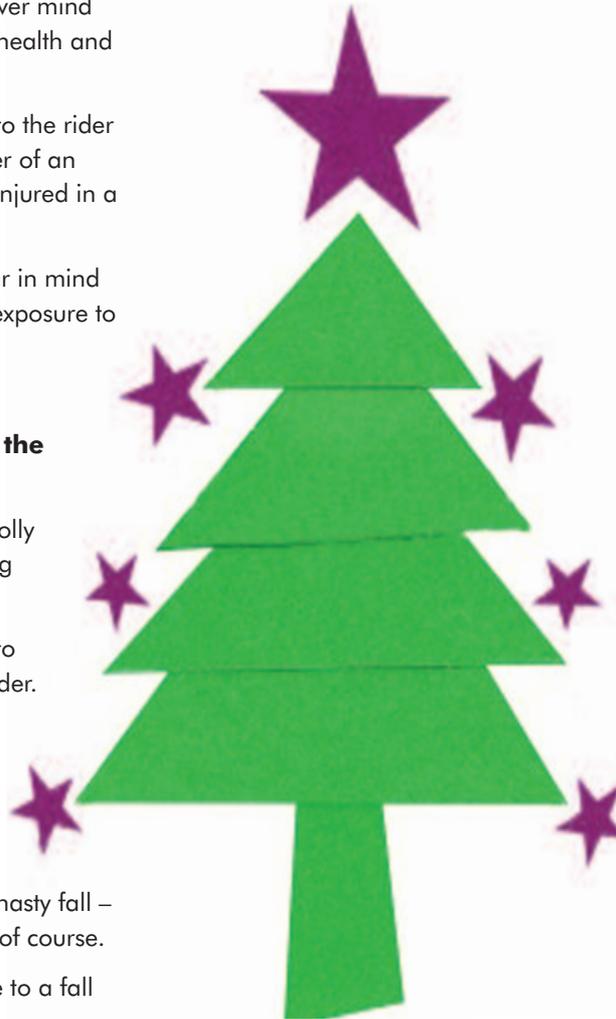
6,420 admissions were due to people falling on or off a ladder.

Walking in the air...

May occur seconds before a nasty fall – unless you are the snowman of course.

18,570 admissions were due to a fall involving ice and snow.

Plus air-walking might be a bit overrated as a hobby – with 4 admissions due to a prolonged stay in a weightless environment.



While Shepherds watch their flocks by night...

Who's keeping an eye on the Christmas dinner?

790 admissions were due to contact with hot household appliances (including ovens) and 370 admissions were due to exposure to an uncontrolled fire in a building or structure.

Rocking around the Christmas tree...

Around is definitely a good idea – but not so much atop – as:

1,420 admissions were the result of falling from trees. Meanwhile, 310 admissions were from contact with plant thorns, spines and sharp leaves. Perhaps plastic trees aren't all bad.

So here it is Merry Christmas – everybody's having fun...

Or perhaps, for some, a little bit too much fun.

2,080 admissions were due to a fall when being carried or supported by other persons (including being dropped) and 46,460 were due to a fall on the same level (including falling from or off a toilet). Meanwhile, 18,610 admissions were due to striking against or being struck by other objects (including walking into a wall).

It can take well into the next day for alcohol consumed the night before to leave your system. Think! about drink if you have to drive or operate machinery the next morning.

How much will your next round cost you?



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THINK
Don't Drink and Drive



December 2018 – Safety & Assurance Bulletin briefing

I have been personally briefed in the contents of this Safety & Assurance Bulletin.

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 bulletin.

Signed: _____ Name: _____ Date: _____

ORIGINAL sheet to be held at District.

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