

DEAD WOOD AND SNAGS - LOOK UP!

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Overhead hazards in the logging woods have wreaked havoc to our forest industry for years. Many wives have become widows by their men being struck by fallen or thrown objects from above. Dead trees and snags are a major issue for our overall safety in the woods. An overhead hazard incident or being struck from above can prove to be catastrophic. Usually a 'struck-by' incident involves the upper body which include the head; neck and the spinal column. As an industry, we have seen a rise in incidents involving dead trees and snags. Whether the job is fully mechanized or a manual operation using chainsaws, the risk from above is present. Many of the recent incidents have involved logging crews with mechanized felling equipment. With that said, dead trees and snags affect everyone in the woods. I feel the best way to address this issue is to push awareness to this problem. Forest industry owners and management people should constantly keep employees aware of the dangers and consequences of the overhead hazards that lurk in their work place. Risk must be identified and dealt with to prevent a loss. Please take the time to have a safety briefing with your crew on **OVERHEAD HAZARDS. LOOK UP!!**

- Use approved and well maintained personal protective equipment (PPE) for head protection.
- Look and scan at least 50 ahead on your ground path. Look for vines that could affect standing timber.
- Look and scan for at least 100 feet ahead for all overhead hazards, especially dead trees and snags.
- Do not place your body under anything that can fall due to gravity or the loss of hydraulic pressure.
- Maintain at least two tree lengths from all felling areas. (300 feet or 100 yards)
- Be visible, wear high visibility clothing.
- Maintain communication with everyone in the work area.
- Never walk into a work area with running or moving equipment until the equipment is stopped, engine cut-off and the hydraulic attachments grounded.

The Heads Up for Hazards program is a great way to start and maintain your crew's awareness to overhead hazards and possibly death from above. Let's focus a little deeper on how to deal with the risk from dead trees and snags on our logging jobs. The life you save may be your own!!

- Dead trees and snags shall be removed when at all possible.
- If the situation is too dangerous, isolate and flag the affected area, no one is allowed near the hazard.
- Use mechanical means to remove dead trees and snags. Never attempt to manually remove such hazards when the mechanical option is available!
- If mechanical help can't access the area of the deadwood, assess the situation. Is the tree stable enough to put on the ground manually? Your 5-part felling plan will help you make a good decision!!

- If the tree can be safely cut, I recommend you make your face-notch “belt-high”. Using a higher than normal face-notch lets the timber-cutter stand erect while making his back-cut. The simple fact of this technique is less spinal column exposure. Being “bent-over” in a standard felling position exposes the spinal column from your head to your tail bone, if you stand up, that exposed area is reduced by half. Looking up is also easier if you are standing.
- Generally speaking, don’t force a dead tree. Hitting a wedge in a dead tree may cause debris to fall from its top. I usually cut the tree with its front lean, this will give you the option to make an accurate path of fall, one side or the other. It is very important that you avoid hitting adjacent timber in fear of thrown or flying objects from above.
- What type of a back-cut are you going to use? I usually will recommend using a conventional back-cut on dead trees. Dead trees are dead FIBER! The controlled-release back-cut will not work effectively if the decayed hinge breaks, again use your felling plan.
- ESCAPE from the falling snag! Eyes to the sky!!
- **REVIEW rule number 3. DO NOT MANUALLY FELL DEAD TREES AND SNAGS IF MECHANIZED EQUIPMENT IS AVAILABLE!**

The risk of dead trees and snags has always been present in the logging woods. Dead wood has accounted for many injuries and deaths in our industry. The use of good and well maintained PPE helps reduce injury from above. More importantly, if the employee is trained to recognize and properly deal with a situation, his PPE will become his second line of defense. Good decisions lead to reduced risk. Lessened risk prevents or lessens the chance of an injury. Until next time **LOOK UP AGAIN!**