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## SAFETY ALERT

**08-S-4**

### **FELLER-BUNCHER OPERATOR HAS CLOSE CALL WITH POWER LINE**

February 2008

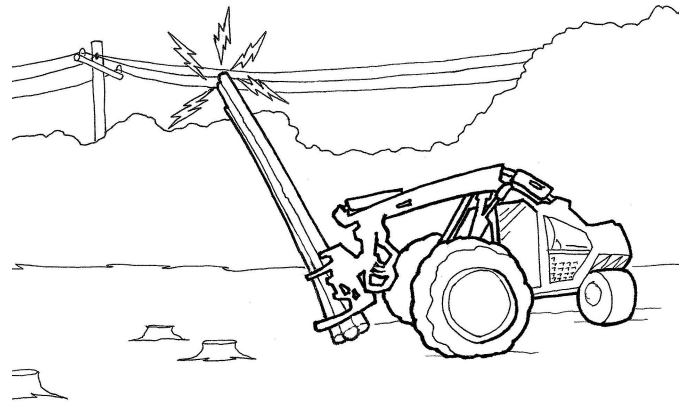
[www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/08-S-4.html](http://www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/08-S-4.html)

**BACKGROUND:** On a hot summer day in the South, a feller-buncher operator was performing a first thinning operation near a low-voltage power line. The power line right-of-way had not been well maintained, and undergrowth camouflaged the power line. There was also a dense “edge effect” along the right-of-way’s tree line.

**PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:** The feller-buncher operator was in his late 30s and had 15 years of logging experience, eight of which were with his current employer as a feller-buncher operator. The logging firm had a good safety program, and the operator had no previous accidents.

**UNSAFE ACT OR CONDITION:** The power line was camouflaged by dense undergrowth. The feller-buncher operator was aware of the power line but lost sight of it due to the dense undergrowth.

**ACCIDENT:** The feller-buncher operator cut several stems and accumulated them in the machine’s accumulating arms. As the operator positioned the machine to lay the stems down, the severed stems touched the live power line. The operator immediately moved away from the power line.



**INJURY:** Fortunately, the feller-buncher operator was not injured. All of the twelve-volt breakers in the machine were shorted out, and the low-voltage power line breaker was tripped. The operator could have been electrocuted if the power line breaker had not tripped and if the stems had remained in contact with the power line.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:** Operators should remain aware of their surroundings at all times. The power line right-of-way should have been clearly marked (flagged or painted) to delineate its boundaries and no work performed near the “live” power line, establishing a “safety zone” of at least 50 feet. OSHA may require a greater distance (depending on voltage) from overhead power lines, as specified in 29 CFW 1910.333(c)(3). See FRA Loss Control Overview LCO-30, *Power Line Safety*, at [www.loggingsafety.com](http://www.loggingsafety.com).

*Reviewed by:*

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*Please follow equipment manufacturers’ recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.*