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## SAFETY ALERT

**09-S-1**

### DECKHAND BREAKS LEG AT LOG DECK

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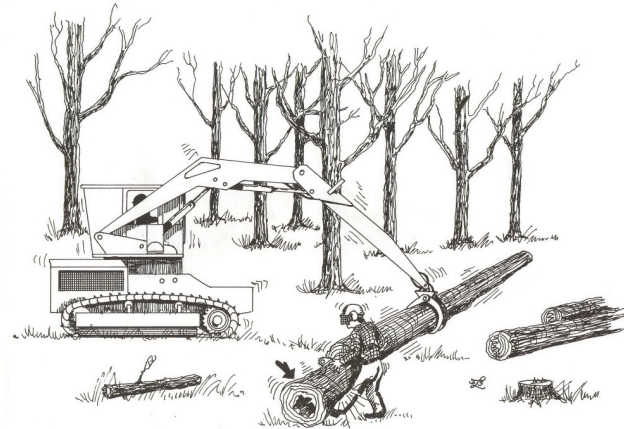
[www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/09-s-1.html](http://www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/09-s-1.html)

**BACKGROUND:** On a cold winter day in the Appalachians, a deckhand was bucking large-diameter trees that were approximately 60 feet long. The logs were felled in the woods, flown by helicopter to a pre-deck area, and then skidded to the log deck by a grapple skidder where the deckhand then bucked the logs alongside a tracked loader. The terrain was steep and mountainous, and there were three inches of snow on the ground.

**PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:** The 26-year-old deckhand had been employed with this logging crew for approximately four years. He was considered fully trained, had no previous accident history, and was wearing all appropriate personal protective equipment.

#### UNSAFE ACTS AND CONDITION:

The deckhand was working too close to the tracked loader. In fact, the loader's grapple was holding a log which had been bucked but had some butt rot and swell on the end, and the deckhand was using his chain saw at waist level to cut off the end of the log.



**ACCIDENT:** When the deckhand cut through the end of the log, it fell to the ground and struck him in his lower left leg.

**INJURY:** The deckhand sustained an open fracture to the tibia and fibula of his left leg. He required surgery to install stainless steel pins and hardware for recovery and healing. He lost four months of work. The estimated medical costs were over \$130,000.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:

- 1) Deckhands and other on-the-ground employees should maintain a safe working distance from the loader and from other equipment when working.
- 2) Employees should recognize, and devise a plan to avoid, the hazard of a log dropping and striking or rolling into a deckhand during bucking.
- 3) Chain saw operators should never buck a log that is lifted off the ground by a loader's grapple.

Reviewed by:  
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*Please follow equipment manufacturers' recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.*