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SAFETY ALERT

09-S-13

TIMBER CUTTER HIT BY FALLING SNAG

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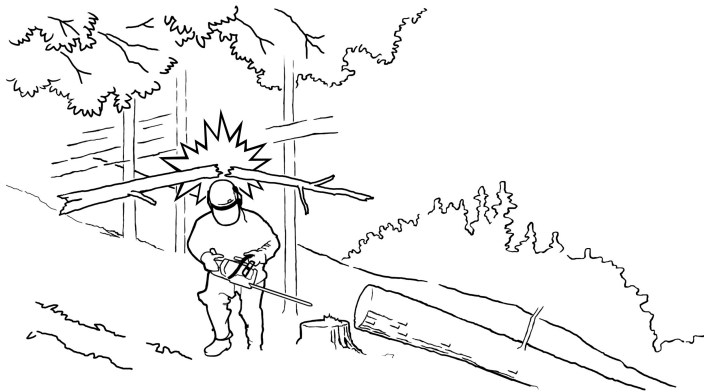
www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/09-s-13.html

BACKGROUND: On a dry, partly sunny summer day in the Appalachians, a timber cutter was working in very dense undergrowth on the south side of a hill. He was in a mixed hardwood and pine stand with trees averaging 14 inches DBH. The cutter's work procedure was to fell a strip of trees with the contour of the hill and then refuel and walk back through the downed trees to limb and top them.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS: The 47-year-old cutter had worked in the woods for the past 10 years. He was fully trained in proper timber felling techniques and was wearing a hard hat, safety screen, ear muffs, and chain saw cut-resistant pants.

UNSAFE ACT AND CONDITION: The dense vegetation prevented the cutter from identifying a dead pine snag as a hazard.

ACCIDENT: Apparently the timber cutter had felled a different pine tree, without incident, when the dead pine snag, approximately 6 inches in diameter and 30 feet long, broke off and hit him on the hardhat. A stub on the limb penetrated his hardhat and created a hole one inch in diameter.



INJURY: The cutter didn't know what had happened, but the skidder operator/business owner saw him walking up the skid road, carrying his saw and bleeding from the head. The skidder operator immediately took him to the landing. After checking to make sure that there weren't any other injuries to the cutter and that the bleeding had stopped, the business owner transported him to a local hospital for a CAT scan and a more complete evaluation. The injured timber cutter needed 25 staples

on the top of his head and another 5 staples above his eyebrow; the eyebrow injury was a result of the hardhat being pushed down from the impact of the snag. He returned to work after ten days.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION: Always be aware of potential hazard trees and remove them from working areas (with mechanized equipment if possible) prior to cutting timber.

This incident underscores the value of wearing personal protective equipment that is in good condition: the cutter was wearing a hard hat that used a six-point attachment system for the internal suspension. The suspension was not damaged and withstood the impact of the falling snag, preventing a more serious injury or death.

Reviewed by:
Rick Meyer
Appalachian/Southwide Region Manager

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