



FOREST RESOURCES ASSOCIATION INC.

600 JEFFERSON PLAZA, SUITE 350
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20852

PHONE: 301/838-9385

FAX: 301/838-9481

SAFETY ALERT

09-S-3

TREE ENTERS UNPROTECTED SKIDDER CAB

February 2009

www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/09-s-3.html

BACKGROUND: On a fall morning in the Appalachians, a skidder operator was pushing brush off a skid trail.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS: The 20-year-old skidder operator had been working in logging about six months and had only been running the skidder for approximately two months. The owner and another skidder operator had trained him, but the training was still ongoing. The skidder operator had been sent home the day before, because he did not want to wear his hard hat. However, he returned the next day and presumably was wearing his hardhat. He was not wearing gloves.

UNSAFE ACTS AND CONDITIONS: The skidder operator was running an older model cable skidder with no right-side door—the door had been removed because it had been dented and banged up over the years and would not stay shut.

ACCIDENT: As he was moving the skidder forward to push brush off a skid trail, an eight-inch-diameter treetop unexpectedly entered the cab through the open doorway. The operator reacted by grabbing the branch with his right hand, but the tree forced his hand against the gearshift and his right shoulder against a back corner of the cab.



INJURY: The treetop's force severed two of his fingers and smashed a third. The skidder operator went into shock, and he was driven out of the woods by the timber cutter. There was a first aid kit on the job, but crew members were too panicked to think of using it. The injured skidder operator was driven to the local hospital about 20 miles away (the crew needed directions to find the hospital). He was then transported by helicopter to a large city's hospital. His two fingers were reattached, and it was possible that his shoulder would require surgery.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:

- 1) Never operate a skidder if a door or any ROPS/FOPS protection has been removed or disabled.
- 2) Spend extra time training inexperienced employees to recognize and avoid general logging hazards and duty-specific hazards. Require them to wear personal protective equipment.
- 3) Conduct safety meetings with crew members at least every month; be sure that crew members know how to respond in the event of an injury or a medical emergency on the job.
- 4) Ensure that all crew members know the route to the nearest hospital, and implement a method for the crew members to maintain communication with each other. Verify cell phone coverage or other "best way" to contact emergency medical services.

Reviewed by:

Rick Meyer

Appalachian/Southeastern Region Manager

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