



## FOREST RESOURCES ASSOCIATION INC.

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## SAFETY ALERT

### 10-S-7

### OBSERVERS OF FELLING OPERATION HAVE CLOSE CALL

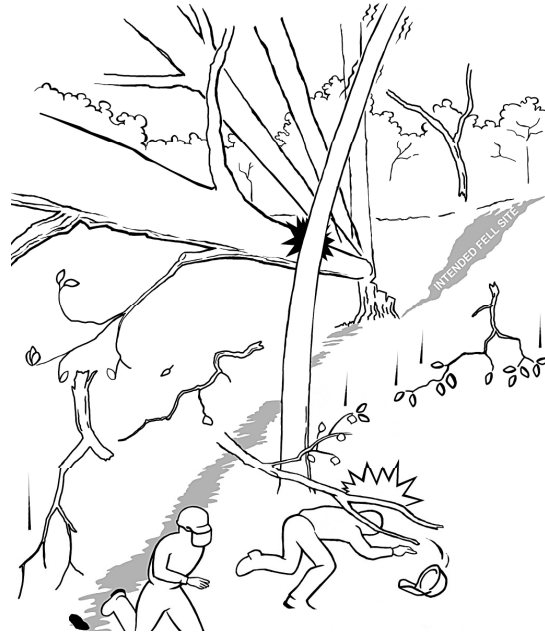
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[www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/10-s-7.html](http://www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/10-s-7.html)

**BACKGROUND:** Two foresters were observing a timber cutter felling a large, difficult tree on an Appalachian-region broken mine spoil site in the spring.

**PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:** The foresters had over 65 years of combined work experience. Both had several years of chain saw safety training and experience in the woods. Both were wearing hardhats with face shields, hearing protection, and steel-toed boots. Part of the purpose of their being on the job was to give them an opportunity to observe and promote logging safety practices.

**UNSAFE ACT AND CONDITION:** The timber cutter had felled two of the side forks of a large sycamore. He notched an open face on the main trunk four feet above the ground to get above the fork. The tree had very little appearance of lean. After he had created a hinge and cut around the tree, the tree slowly sat back on the open cut away from the intended direction of fall. The timber cutter inserted a wedge but was unable to move the tree. The foresters offered the use of their wedges and axe to pound the wedges. At one point, the timber cutter was utilizing four wedges in this tree.



There was no room next to the base of the tree, and the two foresters found themselves repeatedly moving back approximately 30 feet behind an adjacent 40-inch-diameter sycamore tree as a safety zone. This apparent safety zone was opposite from the intended felling direction of the tree.

**ACCIDENT:** In frustration, the timber cutter cut through one of the hinges. The tree moved slightly in the intended direction. The timber cutter warned the two foresters of the loss of control, but they felt they were in a safe location. The timber cutter severed the other hinge, and the tree immediately fell towards the two foresters.

**INJURY:** Tree tops showered the two foresters, knocking them both to the ground, pinning one under a large limb, and knocking the hardhats off of both. Fortunately, they sustained only minor cuts and bruises.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:**

- Use mechanical means, such as a skidder, to bring set-back, hung, or other hazard trees safely to the ground.
- Never assume you are in a safe position when close to an active felling operation. Always stay at least two tree-lengths ("twice tree height") away from a timber cutter.
- If observing a cutter to train or to learn, always maintain an escape route that both the timber cutter and observer can use.
- If there is not enough room or the terrain is too restrictive to train or receive instruction at the stump, move at least two tree-lengths away.

*Reviewed by:*

Rick Meyer  
Appalachian/Southwide Region Manager

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