CHAIN SAW KICKBACK TO THE FACE

SAFETY ALERT

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http://loggingsafety.com/safety_alerts

BACKGROUND:
On a late summer day in the Appalachians, a logging crew member was delimbing and trimming a skidder drag of felled timber.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:
The 65-year-old logging crew member had been logging and operating a chain saw for his entire adult life. Although he was an experienced skidder operator and chain saw operator, he rarely wore any personal protective equipment and was not doing so on this day.

UNSAFE ACTS AND CONDITIONS:
The operation was mechanized, but the skidder operators still used a saw every day to top and trim some of the drags and bunches of wood. In this incident, the logging crew member pushed the nose of his chain saw bar into a pile of tops to trim the limbs.

ACCIDENT:
The tip of his saw bar contacted a limb, which caused the saw to kick back violently toward the crew member's face. The saw's chain brake activated and stopped the running of the chain, but the chain and bar still struck the logger in his face.

INJURY:
The logger received a long cut in his cheek that required eight stitches. He lost two days of work.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:
- Chain saw operators should always wear complete personal protective equipment, including hard hat, face shield or safety glasses, protective chaps, and cut-resistant boots. Gloves and high-visibility vests are also advisable.
- Do not allow the tip (kickback point) of the chain saw bar to contact wood or other objects while limbing, bucking, or felling.
- Inspect chain saws before use and ensure that the chain brake is fully functional. In this incident, the functioning chain brake prevented a very severe injury or death.
- Employers should implement and enforce a company policy requiring employees to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment for the task at hand. (See FRA Loss Control Overview #18 – Personal Protective Equipment, for more details: www.loggingsafety.com/sites/loggingsafety.com/files/bulletin_pdfs/LCO18.pdf.)

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