IMPROPER USE OF FELLER-BUNCHER LEADS TO FATALITY

SAFETY ALERT 16-S-7

August 2016

http://loggingsafety.com/safety_alerts

BACKGROUND:
At the end of the work day in the Southeast, a logging crew and a trucking contractor decided to right an overturned chip van. They used chains and the skidder’s winch cable to pull and lift the trailer to an upright position.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:
The skidder operator and feller-buncher operator were well-trained in their respective jobs. However, they had never helped to right an overturned trailer before. Both operators were wearing all required Personal Protective Equipment and were considered “good” employees.

UNSAFE ACT AND CONDITION:
The skidder operator told the buncher operator to lift him up so he could remove the chains from the top of the trailer. The skidder driver stepped onto the cutting head and instructed the buncher operator to raise him up.

ACCIDENT:
The operator stated that when he turned the buncher on and started to raise the head into the air, the top accumulator arm activated and closed across the man’s chest. The operator said he never touched the button to activate the accumulator arms. The machine was then turned off, and during the investigation it was found that there was some minute debris in the switch that activates the accumulator arms. The condition was duplicated and then the switch was replaced.

INJURY:
The individual died at the scene from massive crushing injuries to the chest.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:
1) Never allow anyone to use the feller-buncher as a lift device—especially not to lift a person!
2) Use a ladder or other approved device to access high locations.
3) Inspect rubber switch boots on feller-bunchers to make sure they do not allow debris to clog the switch.
4) Hold safety meetings to keep the focus on preventing similar incidents from occurring.

Reviewed by:
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