

Choker Setter Falls 50 Feet from a Cliff

Task: Walking down a steep slope to set chokers **Occupation:** Choker setter **Release Date:** February, 2014

A 19-year-old choker setter (victim) was injured when he fell from a cliff. A crew was cable logging at a site with a mobile tower yarder using a standing skyline with a radio controlled carriage. The victim was part of a three-man rigging crew. He had six months experience setting chokers. The terrain was steep sloped with sections of cliffs. After the crew set up the yarder, the victim, along with another choker setter and the rigging slinger, started walking along a path down the slope to set chokers. They had descended this path three times. All of them were aware that about 100 feet below the yarder there was a cliff. The path they were taking skirted the top edge of this cliff. As the victim approached the cliff, he lost his footing when loose rocks under his feet gave way. He fell 50 feet down the cliff. The victim was taken to a hospital. He suffered multiple injuries, including a fractured spine. After the incident the crew took another route that was much longer, but avoided the cliff.



Photo of incident scene taken from near the top of the 50 foot cliff from which the choker setter fell.

Safety Requirements

- When moving to a new job site, site specific hazards should be identified and discussed during the pre-job safety meeting. See WAC 296-54-51510.
- Take additional precautions to ensure safe logging operations when extreme weather or other extreme conditions create hazards. If the logging operation cannot be made safe, the work must be discontinued until safe to resume. See WAC 296-54-507(2).
- Provide safety training for each employee. See WAC 296-54-507(1).

Recommended Safe Practices

- Create a pre-job plan that evaluates the site specific terrain for fall hazards and addresses how to avoid or minimize these hazards. This plan may include designated employee “no-go” areas.
- Do not allow employees to walk or work in areas which expose them to fall hazards that could result in serious injury or death.
- Train new and inexperienced employees to recognize fall hazards.
- Use experienced personnel for more technical or high risk rigging terrain.
- Use a fall restraint system when exposed to unacceptable fall hazards.
- Rigging crews should plan and use the safest route when working on steep slopes and near cliffs, bluffs, and rock outcrops.
- As caulk boots do not have good traction on rock, try to avoid or minimize walking on steep rocky terrain when possible.

Resources*

- Free workplace safety and health consultations are available from L&I at: www.SafetyConsult.Lni.wa.gov
- Free video from Labor and Industries:
Be Safe in the Woods at: www.LNI.BeSafeintheWoods
- Free handbook from Oregon OSHA: Yarding and Loading Handbook at: www.OR_OSHA_YardingandLoading
- Free handbook on cable yarding systems by WorkSafe BC at: www.worksafeBC_CableYardingSystems
- Accident Prevention Program for Logging Operations. Washington State Logger Safety Initiative. www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Basics/Programs/Accident/Samples/LSILoggingOperationsSampleAPP.doc

*These internet links have been shortened for publication and will not operate in your web browser as written. To access these resources, please go to the SHARP publications page at www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/Pubs/, click on *Logging*, open this document and follow the links from there. Prepared by Randy Clark, WA State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), WA State Dept. of Labor & Industries. The FACE Program is supported in part by a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH grant# 5 U60 OH008487-09).

