

## Chaser Caught in Choker Bight

**Task:** Releasing chokers on logs

**Occupation:** Chaser

**Release Date:** July 11, 2014

A 30-year-old chaser was severely injured when his leg was caught in the bight, or loop, of a choker and the line went taut. The experienced chaser, who had worked for his employer for seven years, was working at a landing where tree-length logs were being yarded. The site consisted of a tower yarder utilizing a standing skyline with a drop-line motorized carriage. A processor was on the landing processing and stacking logs and keeping the landing chute clear. The landing was slightly sloped and large enough to land most turns. But some turns consisting of a single tree-length log (as long as 140 feet) needed to be secured from sliding downhill. The crew was aware of the hazard of longer logs sliding away at the landing and developed a method of preventing this. These turns were held in place by the yarder operator while the processor grabbed the log and laid it down on the landing, so that the chaser could unhook the choker. The crew had successfully brought in numerous turns using this method. Turns that consisted of shorter logs that the crew determined to be not at risk of sliding away were deposited at the landing where the chaser would unhook the chokers without the aid of the processor stabilizing the log. When a turn consisting of two shorter logs and one longer log was brought to the landing, the chaser went to release the chokers of the two shorter logs. The chaser believed the turn to be stable and secure from movement. As the chaser approached the turn, the longer log began to slide downhill, as it did so it tightened up the chokers on the shorter logs and dragged them along. The chaser's lower right leg was caught in the bight, or loop, of a choker as it tightened up. He was dragged several feet and then lifted about 10 feet off the ground where he dangled upside-down for about 10-20 seconds before the yarder operator was able to lower him to the ground. Due to the compression of the choker around his leg, he suffered a severe crush injury requiring surgery and rehabilitation treatment. Nearly a year after his injury he had not fully recovered enough to be able to return to his job.



Incident landing site with yarder and processor.

### Safety Requirements

- Logs must be stable and secure before being approached by employees and before chokers are unhooked. See WAC 296-54-577(10).

### Recommended Safe Practices

- Do not move in to unhook chokers until you have made eye contact with the yarder operator and the operator signals it is safe to do so.
- If a turn is unstable, stay in the clear and signal a machine operator to reposition the unstable log(s).
- The rigging slinger should determine whether it is safe to send a turn to the landing. In this incident it would have been safer to send a turn with the two shorter logs and then another turn with the longer log.

### Resources\*

- Free workplace safety and health consultations are available from L&I at: [www.SafetyConsult.Lni.wa.gov](http://www.SafetyConsult.Lni.wa.gov)
- Free video from Labor & Industries, "Be Safe in the Woods" at: [www.LNI.BeSafeintheWoods](http://www.LNI.BeSafeintheWoods)
- Accident Prevention Program for Logging Operations. Washington State Logger Safety Initiative at: [www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/TrainingPrevention/Programs/files/LSILoggingOperationsSampleAPP.doc](http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/TrainingPrevention/Programs/files/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/](http://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).

