

Timber Faller Killed When Struck by Maple Top

Task: Falling timber **Occupation:** Faller **Release Date:** August 2017

In September of 2015, a 62-year-old timber faller died after he was struck in the abdomen and pelvis by a maple top. The victim had over 40 years' experience in the logging industry and was highly regarded as a skilled timber faller. The day of the incident was the victim's first day at this logging site. He was brought in to hand fall oversized trees that were too big for the feller buncher. The site supervisor, who operated the feller buncher, walked around the slightly sloping site with the victim to show him the locations of these trees. As they were walking the site, the victim noticed a maple top that was limb-bound with the cedar that he was going to fall. He expressed concern to the supervisor that this could be a problem. The supervisor told him that if he did not think he could cut the cedar tree safely that he would use the feller buncher or loader to knock down the hung-up maple tree. The supervisor left the decision of what to do with the victim. The victim decided to fall the cedar. He cut the cedar and as he was moving away from the falling tree, the 37-foot- long maple top fell on him, causing fatal injuries.



Incident scene showing a reenactment of the faller's location after he was struck by a maple top that fell when he cut and felled a cedar tree (stump in upper right).

Safety Requirements

- Before falling or bucking, conditions such as, but not limited to, snow and ice accumulation, the wind, the lean of tree, dead limbs, and the location of other trees, must be evaluated by the cutter and precautions taken so a hazard is not created for an employee. See [WAC 296-54-539\(2\)](#)
- Danger trees that are unsafe to cut must be blown down with explosives or fell by other safe methods. See [WAC 296-54-53930\(2\)](#)

Recommended Safe Practices

- Use the safest possible method to remove danger trees and hung-up limbs and tree tops. In this instance, using a machine to remove the limb or tree would have removed the hazard.
- No matter how much experience you have, if something does not feel right, stop, evaluate the situation, and make a new plan.

Resources

- In the Clear training packet from the Washington Logger Safety Initiative (LSI):
www.lni.wa.gov/Main/LoggerSafety/Pdfs/TrainingPacketInTheClearCutting.pdf
- Video: Faller recounts how he worked for 37 years accident free:
www2.worksafebc.com/Publications/Multimedia/Videos.asp?ReportID=37764
- LSI Sample Accident Prevention Program for Cutting Operations:
www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/TrainingPrevention/Programs/files/LSICuttingOpera

