

Operator Killed When Struck by Skidder Rolling Down Slope

Task: Skidding logs **Occupation:** Owner/Operator **Release Date:** 2021

In September 2021, a 56-year-old owner/operator died after being struck by his skidder when it rolled down a slope. He had previously logged about three acres of a property with the intention of selling the timber to a mill. Just prior to the incident, he was working alone and using a skidder to skid logs uphill. The operator parked the skidder on a slight slope. He then left the operator's station and walked about 20 feet down the slope where he attached chokers to first one log and then a second log. As he was setting the choker on the second log, the skidder rolled backwards down the slope. The skidder struck him and pinned him against the second log. He died at the scene. Investigators found that, the machine was running and its blade was not lowered to the ground and, according to a family member, the operator knew that the skidder's parking brake did not work and that it had multiple hydraulic leaks and maintenance issues.



The operator had parked the skidder where the person is standing. It then rolled down the slope. The "X" indicates the location of the operator.



Skidder moved after the incident.

Safety Requirements

- Self-propelled logging machines must be equipped with a parking brake system, which must be used to continuously hold a stopped machine stationary within the limits of traction on any grade on which it is operated so as to allow the operator to leave the vehicle without the vehicle moving, and to prevent subsequent movement of the vehicle while unattended. The parking brake system must maintain this parking performance despite any contraction of brake parts, failure of the source of application, energy or leakage of any kind. See [WAC 296-54-57325\(6\)\(c\)](#)
- Before leaving the operator's station of a machine, the operator must ensure that the machine is secured as follows:
 - (a) The parking brake or brake locks must be applied;
 - (b) The transmission must be placed in the manufacturer's specified park position;
 - (c) Each moving element such as, but not limited to, blades, buckets, saws, and shears must be lowered to the ground or otherwise secured. See [WAC 296-54-573\(23\)](#)
- Machines or equipment must not be operated when hydraulic fluid leakage creates contamination of the operator's work station, means of access or egress, or creates other unsafe conditions such as fire hazard or control malfunction. Defective hydraulic hoses, lines, and fittings must be replaced. See [WAC 296-54-57335\(2\)\(4\)](#)

