

# Safety and health alert

## 13/95 Supervisor killed by falling tree branch

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### Incident

An earthmoving company supervisor was killed by a branch that fell from a dead tree, in Gidgegannup in May 1995.

A 20 tonne excavator was digging test holes for soil structure evaluation during site investigations on a rural property, prior to construction of a water catchment dam.

While backfilling, the boom of the excavator struck a nearby dead tree, causing a dead branch 12 metres up the tree to break off. The branch struck the supervisor, who was standing 3 metres from the excavator and 6 metres from the tree.

### Factors

No one at the site identified the hazard of branches falling from a dead tree.

The excavator was working close to a dead tree.

The operator's vision was restricted by the boom, window frame and hydraulic ram of the machine.

### Recommendations

1. Thoroughly assess all possible hazards when using mobile equipment, and brief workers on safe work procedures.
2. Assess the state of trees close to the work area.
3. Check for loose branches "hung up" in trees, and trees "hung up" in other trees, when working near trees.
4. Avoid or remove dead trees close to the work area where practicable.
5. Use machines with a Fall on Protective Structure (FOPS) where there is a risk of falling objects striking the operator.

**Falling branches regularly cause fatalities in this State.**

### Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au), or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: [safety@docep.wa.gov.au](mailto:safety@docep.wa.gov.au).

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