

Safety and health alert

06/97 Softwood tree feller injury

Incident

In January 1997 a softwood tree feller received fractured ribs, concussion and severe internal bruising when struck by a 9 metre long limb that fell from a height of approximately 18 metres whilst cutting a 0.65 metre diameter Pinaster tree. The limb was dislodged from an adjacent tree some 8 metres away.

The tree feller was trained and certificated with some 28 years experience. He had been felling plantation edge trees towards the open area.

Softwood tree felling is hazardous and there has been one fatality and many serious injuries in Western Australia in recent years.

Factors

1. Cutting of the tree continued after it commenced to fall.
2. The entangled 9 metre long limb was not identified prior to the cut commencing.
3. The tree was large.
4. The cut sequence used for the large tree was hazardous.

Recommendations

1. Employers must supervise fellers to ensure their felling technique is maintained in accordance with their training. Typically the National Forest Industry Training Council Publication "Work Technique for Chainsaw Users" and AS2727 is utilized.
2. Employers and fellers must place great emphasis on identification and assessment of overhead hazards in the forest.
3. Fellers must stop cutting once the tree starts to fall, and immediately move along the chosen escape path.
4. Alternatively, the hazard could be largely eliminated if edge trees are removed well before they reach 0.65 metres in diameter.

Further Information

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

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