BC **Forest Safety** Council

Manual harvesting/bucking

Safety Alert Type:
Manual Harvesting/Bucking

Date of Incident: 2008-05-15
Company Name: Western Forest Products

Details of Incident:

A Faller was working in a heli block on an average side hill of 30% to 40% slope. There were lots of pre-identified hazards such as large slabbed cedar snags throughout the block. The faller was attempting to fall a 22 inch diameter, 55 foot tall sound hemlock tree that was adjacent and within eight inches of a 3 foot diameter 71 foot tall cedar snag. The cedar snag had a solid butt and ragged and broken spiked top.

The faller walked around the cedar & hemlock tree twice and had assessed the hemlock to be limb tied into the cedar snag. (It was later confirmed during the investigation that a large limb of the hemlock was growing around a crook in the cedar snag at approximately 37 feet from the ground). The faller made a decision to fall the hemlock first. He was positioned directly below the point where the trees were limb tied to fall the hemlock. As he finished his back-cut and was preparing to get into the clear, a chunk from the cedar snag about 34 inches long and weighing between 10 to 12 pounds fell, striking the faller on the head. The faller was looking up at the time, and was struck with a glancing blow off the top part of his forehead.

Upset Conditions:

1. Stand had a high concentration of large slabbed snag top cedars.
2. Limb tied green tree in close proximity and coupled with a snag.
3. Working directly below the point where the trees were limb tied.

Recommended Preventative Actions:

1. Ensure that areas with high potential falling hazards such as highly decadent stands, heavy concentration of snags, and large boulders are identified at the engineering phase and at the pre-work. (This was done for this area)
2. Ensure that the bull bucker assesses the work area for hazards prior to commencement of falling. (This was done for this area)
3. Assess limb tied trees for hazards such as broken tops, limbs, and loose debris in canopy, and fall both trees together if possible. If either tree can not be safely felled, seek qualified assistance.
4. Get a second opinion / second set of eyes when you encounter a falling difficulty.
5. When dealing with green trees that are limb tied and closely coupled with a snag, do not put yourself in the bite directly below limbs where you do not have a clear view and the potential exists for debris to fall directly where you are working at the base of the tree.
6. If a safe option exists to fall both the green limb bound tree & the snag directly down hill, rather than into lay; choose the option of falling the timber downhill if that will overcome the hazard.

7. If it is safe to do so, cut up the green limb bound tree and use an alternate tree a safe distance away to push the limb bound tree out of the snag.
8. If no safe option exists for removing both the green limb bound tree & the snag, consider blasting the trees.

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