BC **Forest Safety** Council

Manual harvesting/bucking

Safety Alert Type:
Manual Harvesting/Bucking

Location: Campbell River

Date of Incident: 2008-04-14
Company Name: Alternative Forest Operations

Details of Incident:

Weather was clear and mild and the 4 man crew was working well together for 6 hours. The crew was climbing trees located on the outer fringes of a harvest block using standard gear. The crew was topping and spiral pruning trees, known as 'wind-firming'. The terrain was gentle sloping (<10%), the stand consisted of 70 year old second growth fir, hemlock and cedar.

One of the climbers fell 51 feet to the forest floor. He had just completed topping a hemlock, hooked the grapple solidly and rappelled over to this new tree. He set his spurs in the bole of the tree, threw his climbing strap around the stem of the new tree.

The climbing strap is attached to the left side of the climber's belt on a "D" ring and the free end of the climbing strap has a certified carabineer on the end. Once the strap is thrown around the tree the carabineer on the free end of the climbing strap is to be clipped into the "D" ring on the right side of the climber's belt. Once the carabineer is clipped in the climber is to visual check to ensure the carabineer is, in fact, clipped into the "D" ring correctly. During this time the climber is still attached to the rappelling line. In this instance the climber had a hook attached to his climbing belt just behind the location of the "D" ring on his right side. (Photo 1) He inadvertently hooked into the power saw hook NOT the "D" ring. (Photo 2) The climber looked down for his visual check (photo 3&4) and thought that he saw the carabeener locked into the "D" ring. It is important to note the climber would have done this process as many as several hundred times that day. He checked his spur placement and put his full weight onto his strap and spurs, and released his claw line and rappelling line. As he pulled the rappelling line to recover it he rotated his hips and body to the left. This action changed the angle of the power saw hook, the climbing strap slipped off the end of the saw hook.

He fell 51 feet to the ground and landed on his right side. Miraculously, he walked out of the hospital 3 hours later with only bruising.

Recommended Preventative Actions:

Review safe work procedures and rewrite for clarity. Retrain crew in the fulfillment of the intention of the safe work procedures. Review the incident report with the climbing crew and check gear conflicts. Remove or modify gear with any similar conflict. Review visual check procedure, rewrite and implement so it never happens again. Rewrite weekly and monthly safety audits to observed work practices capture this and similar critical actions. Write a clear policy statement regarding gear modification.

More Information Contact Details:

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