



Close Call: Runaway buckskin log hidden by fog

Location: Berry Creek (West Kootenays – Slocan area)

Date of Incident: June 17, 2011

Details of Incident: The yarder was pulling uphill on a 50% slope and the chokermen were about 140m below. It was a foggy day with light drizzle and the crew could not see the landing. A turn of logs had been yarded up and one of the logs was a buckskin log and very slippery with sap and rain.

At the landing, the loader operator manually unhooked the chokers. After clearing the turn, the chokers were pulled up to the carriage and the carriage began to move back down. It is thought that one of the choker bells hit the buckskin log which caused it to dislodge and slide back down off the landing.

The crew, hearing the carriage on its return journey, had moved back into the active area. The “long whistle” was sounded as soon as the log had started moving but the crew could not see it and did not know where it would end up. One chokerman went right and the other left, both entering what were thought to be “safe areas” in some retention trees. However, the runaway log changed direction and headed for one worker, missing him by 5 metres.

Recommended Preventative Actions:

1. Always secure the turn with the loader before moving the carriage, which could dislodge a log.
2. On foggy days that impair visibility between the chokermen and the yarder, especially if there are high-risk buckskin logs, don't allow the crew to move back into the active area until the loader has removed the logs from the landing.
3. Try to set up the landing so that logs can be pulled onto a near-level landing area rather than a sloped area.

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