

## WorkSafeBC provides the following guideline on Regulation 26.28 Summoning Qualified Assistance

Issued June 26, 2014

### **Regulatory excerpt**

Section 26.28 of the *OHS Regulation* ("*Regulation*") states:

(1) Qualified assistance must be readily available to fallers in case of difficulty, emergency or injury.

(2) Fallers and buckers must have an effective means to summon assistance.

Section 26.23(2)(h) and (j) of the *Regulation* states:

(2) Fallers and buckers associated with falling activities must be provided with and follow written safe work practices acceptable to the Board for the type of work activity they perform, including procedures for the following:

(h) summoning and rendering assistance to manage a falling difficulty or to deal with an emergency;

(j) ensuring the well-being of each faller and bucker at least every half hour and at the end of the work shift.

### **Purpose of guideline**

The intent of section 26.28 of the *Regulation* is to ensure fallers have qualified assistance readily available and have an effective means of summoning that assistance. This guideline provides an explanation of some of the terms used in the regulatory requirements.

### **Difficulty, emergency, or injury**

The *Regulation* requires that assistance be readily available for situations of difficulty, emergency, or injury. In the context of this section, these terms have the following meanings:

**Difficulty** — A difficult situation for a faller is one where advice or assistance is needed before work can proceed but the situation is not urgent.

**Emergency** — An emergency for a faller is a situation where urgent action is required to prevent or control a hazard or otherwise allow a quick return to normal operations. There is usually less time for planning in an emergency. An example would be when a windstorm has caused blocked egress from the bush.

**Injury** — Any incident requiring first aid service.

### **Qualified assistance**

Part 1 of the *Regulation* defines "qualified" as being knowledgeable of the work, the hazards

involved and the means to control the hazards, by reason of education, training, experience or a combination thereof.

In section 26.28(1), "Qualified assistance" means a person(s) capable of effectively helping or advising and assisting a faller. The qualifications necessary to advise or assist will differ depending on whether the need is because of difficulty, emergency, or injury. In the case of a falling difficulty, another certified faller or qualified falling supervisor may be necessary to provide advice or assistance, whereas a person with first aid certification will be required in the case of injury. The required response times will also depend on the assistance required. First aid and emergency assistance usually need to be available more quickly than assistance to resolve a falling difficulty.

Guidance on the timeliness of first aid response can be found in OHS Guideline [G3.18\(2\) Availability of a first aid attendant](#). Required response times for qualified assistance regarding falling difficulties and dangerous tree scenarios can be different from first aid response. Resolution of these situations may take some time and does not necessarily require having someone immediately available for assistance if the hazard to workers is controlled during the wait period e.g., for a dangerous tree, the faller follows the process of marking the hazard area, informs his or her supervisor and any affected workers, and stays out of the area until a resolution is planned. Qualified assistance may then come from another faller, a qualified falling supervisor, a machine operator, etc.

In some ground skidding operations, single fallers are watched by machine operators. This may provide acceptable access to qualified assistance as long as all the necessary assistance is available e.g., if the machine operator is a first aid attendant, is able to readily observe the faller, drive right up and use the machine to rescue or assist the faller, and evacuation is not exceptionally difficult. This is not the case in most cable yarding operations on steep ground, as mobile equipment cannot usually access the falling area. In this case, the required assistance for a faller would be from another faller or qualified falling supervisor.

In steep logging operations, the only person that can effectively assist a faller in case of difficulty, emergency, or injury, is another faller or another worker who has equivalent skills. If, for instance, a faller is pinned by a log or tree, rescue can usually only be accomplished by someone who knows how to assess falling hazards and can buck him out. An occupational first aid attendant, machine operator, etc., usually cannot do this.

Regardless of the means utilized by the employer to make assistance readily available, the person providing the assistance must:

- Be available to be summoned.
- Have an effective method of being summoned.
- Be prepared, equipped, and able to promptly render first aid. Prompt provision of first aid service means the first aid attendant can reach injured workers within 10 minutes. Refer to OHS Guideline G3.18(2).
- Know the faller's location.

- Be trained in the requirements of safely approaching and obtaining permission to enter the hazard area (two tree lengths).

### **Falling partner system**

In practice, fallers often rely on a "falling partner systems" for the required assistance. A partner system is an arrangement whereby two fallers are positioned in work areas such that they can readily attend and assist each other. In this system, each faller has a designated falling *partner*. More than two fallers may be included in this arrangement provided that each faller has the same access to assistance as if he or she were attended by a single designated *partner*.

The fallers' work areas must be arranged to provide sufficient room for them to be clear of the area within a two-tree length radius of the trees being felled, as required by section [26.24\(1\)](#) of the *Regulation*.

In this system, each faller has a knowledgeable and capable worker (qualified assistance) within beckoning distance to offer advice in case of difficulty and assistance in case of emergency. Accident investigations have resulted in recommendations that the injured faller should have called his *partner* over to help with a difficult or dangerous situation. This call is unlikely to happen if the only assistance available is a grade excavator operator (requiring a means of contact, caulk boots put on, etc.) or a faller at another helipad (requiring a means of contact, a helicopter to pick him up and take him to the pad, find his way to the falling site. etc.). Thus, relying on the grade operator in this example does not meet the requirement for qualified assistance.

A *partner system* would be an appropriate choice for the following:

- Work in steep areas
- Falling timber under conditions that may result in the need for advice or assistance which can only be provided by another experienced faller
- Work in areas where the faller could be pinned by rolling logs or falling trees, and cannot readily be reached by equipment capable of freeing them

At the faller's location, the *partner* must do the following:

- Be able to affect rescue if required. If, for instance, a faller is pinned by a log or tree, rescue can usually only be accomplished by another faller or someone who can assess and mitigate imminent danger, obtain a chain saw if the faller's is not available, judge pivot points, position, and use wedges, and otherwise be able to buck the faller out without aggravating the situation.
- Be able to slash a path for evacuation, if required.
- Have sufficient knowledge to discuss a falling or bucking difficulty or emergency and help plan strategy.
- Be able to assist in overcoming the difficulty or emergency.

Workers other than certified fallers may be a *partner* only if they can provide equivalent level of assistance and fulfill the other requirements of the *Regulation*.

## **No falling partner**

There is no regulatory requirement for an employer to utilize a *partner system* to provide the necessary qualified assistance. Subject to the criteria explained above in this guideline, a system utilizing qualified assistance from other than another faller in proximity may satisfy the regulatory requirements where the faller is in the following:

- In an easily accessible location
- Able to safely wait for assistance, mark the hazard area, and inform others of the hazard
- Performing work in areas where, if he or she could be pinned by rolling logs or falling trees, he or she could readily be reached by a qualified person(s) or equipment capable of freeing him or her
- The only faller employed at the operation
  - has another qualified person available to provide emergency services
  - another faller or qualified falling supervisor can be brought in to assist in overcoming falling difficulties

## **Safe work practices and procedures**

The documented falling plan required by section [26.2](#) of the *Regulation* needs to include provision for qualified assistance.

For example, section 26.23(2)(h) requires that fallers and buckers be provided with and follow written procedures specifying the means of summoning and rendering assistance in case of falling difficulty or emergency. The procedures will need to address all three areas — falling difficulty, emergencies, and injury.

Section 26.23(2)(i) requires that fallers and buckers be provided with and follow written safe work procedures for ensuring the well-being of each faller and bucker at least every half hour and at the end of the work shift. The written procedures must specify the nature and timing of the checks.

## **Summoning assistance**

Section 26.28(2) requires that fallers and buckers have an effective means of summoning assistance. The means will depend upon the circumstances. Many fallers use a radio. A whistle, although sometimes not as effective as other methods, is fairly reliable, is the minimum means, and should be available to all fallers. The whistle needs to be checked periodically and should be fastened in a location that will allow the faller to blow it even if his arms are pinned. Note that a "pea" whistle may not be effective in areas where the "pea" can freeze.

In a situation where an equipment operator provides qualified assistance, a whistle is not likely to be an acceptable means of summoning assistance due to the noise levels of the equipment and the airtight nature of many cabs.

Visit WorkSafeBC's Website: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/law-policy/occupational-health-safety/searchable-ohs-regulation/ohs-guidelines/guidelines-part-26#SectionNumber:G26.28>