

FATALITY ALERT

– PRELIMINARY INFORMATION –

BCFSC #2021-03-15

On March 15, a manual tree faller was fatally injured when he was struck by the top of a Hemlock danger tree at a logging site near Port McNeil.

We extend our condolences to the family and friends of the deceased and our sympathies to all those affected by this incident.

This is the second manual tree falling fatality this month and the second harvesting fatality of 2021. This incident is still under investigation and details are still to be determined.

The following safety information should be reviewed with all manual tree falling operations to help prevent further serious incidents:

1. All fallers will encounter unexpected hazards and upset conditions in their day to day work. Prior to falling, it is important to assess and make a plan for all hazards including danger trees. Ongoing assessments, looking for new hazards which could include potential chain reactions and trees, logs or rocks that might have become unstable, are critical.
2. If you have any doubts of whether a danger tree can be felled safely, stop and discuss with your supervisor or qualified assistance to determine whether the tree can be felled safely, or if alternate means are required such as blasting, machine assist or creation of a No Work Zone. Frequent discussions between supervisors and falling crews about the importance of stopping and calling your supervisor or your falling partner when you come across or create an upset condition or unexpected hazards are extremely important.
3. Fall danger trees progressively before performing work in the area made hazardous by the danger tree. Bypassed danger trees are unacceptable! Danger trees left standing can create additional hazards such as the unplanned falling of the tree, or having limbs or chunks break off unexpectedly. Where practicable, safely remove danger trees prior to adjacent live trees.
4. Fifty percent of fallers' serious injuries are caused when they are struck by overhead hazards. Managing overhead hazards requires careful ongoing assessments and planning. Never work in the danger zone under a hung-up tree.
5. Before falling or bucking begins, ensure a safe escape route(s) is planned and prepared for every tree. Escape routes must be at a minimum of 3m (10ft) away from the base of the tree being felled, preferably to cover. If no escape route is available, falling or bucking must not take place.
6. Falling or bucking close to rock bluffs, windfall or in holes can limit escape options. It is not acceptable to go below any felled or bucked timber to work. 90 percent of all falling incidents occur within 15 seconds of falling a tree, within 5 feet of the stump. Ensure an escape route has been prepared and tested prior to starting any cuts.

As more detail is made available, the BCFSC will provide additional resources and information.