

Hazard Alert: Winch Assist Harvesting

A recent incident of a winch assist machine sliding on rock, highlights the importance of operators ensuring they are aware that traction assist systems are designed to be winch assist not winch support this means the machine must be able to maintain traction on its own at any time.

In this case the operator positioned themselves on too thin of soils and started to slide. The weight of the machine, along with the slope of the ground, meant the force of the machine sliding was greater than the tension on the winch. This allowed the machine to slide down the hill and over a small bluff.



- Ensure operators understand the traction assist system-holding force and stop-braking force, and any of their differences.
- WorkSafeBC regulation 26.16 for slope limitation states: a crawler tractor, feller buncher, excavator and other similar equipment is not to be operated on a slope which exceeds 40% unless qualified person conducts a risk assessment of that operation and written safe work practices acceptable to the Board are developed and implemented to ensure the equipment's stability during operation.
- Steep slope logging risk assessment site plans need to include an assessment of operating areas with unsafe areas below to ensure equipment is not put in a location where loss of traction would compromise the machines stability.
- Operators must continually assess their work areas to ensure machine stability can be maintained at all times.
- No go areas may be identified as equipment works in a block due to poor ground traction conditions. Ensure they are communicated to your supervisor and other workers and have alternative harvest options available to deal with these areas.