

SAFETY ALERT



Overhead Felling Dangers

Background

Several incidents have been recorded recently where fallers have had near misses from branches and dead spars falling out of the tops of trees during the felling phase.

Potential Harm

Ranging from minor medical treatment up to fatal injuries.

Note: Cracked helmet - faller struck at base of tree by dead limb.



Key Steps to Safe Felling

1. Clear all vegetation from around the base of each tree and the escape route. The faller must be able to clearly see into the top of the tree – to do hazard assessments, to observe crown movement, to identify falling debris.
2. Identify any unattached branches (hazards) in the top of the tree.
3. Falling trees into other trees may cause branches to break – these broken branches are high risk hazards. If you have damaged a standing tree consider making an effort to mark the tree, with paint, to ensure the hazard is not forgotten.
4. After completing a risk assessment decide whether you can control the hazards. Stop work and get another opinion if you are unsure. As a priority use mechanical assistance where possible.
5. Ensure your escape route is clear of hazards and that at any point along the escape route you can see into the crown.
6. Plan your cuts so that the back-cut is undertaken from the safest side. If fallers have a habit of only putting the back-cut in from one side (ie with a pulling chain) then safety will be compromised. Fallers should be able to use either a pulling or pushing chain to apply the back-cut. The choice should be the safest – not the most comfortable and/or least energy.

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7. Watch the top of the tree while completing the back-cut. Kneeling while you put in the back-cut provides greater neck rotation and improved visibility into the crown. While crouching gives greater speed – preference is for fallers to kneel
8. Retreat a safe distance down the escape path as the tree starts to fall. Treat every tree as a learning experience – take the time to evaluate what happened. Did it go as planned? Can I do anything different next time?
9. And finally fallers should be regularly monitored for their willingness to take risks. The consequence of error for tree fallers can be fatal therefore any risk taking behaviours must be eliminated. Do regular SBOs and ensure negative behaviours are changed or re-task the individual.

MAKE THE TIME

LOOK UP

PLAN

CHOOSE SAFETY FIRST

EXECUTE PLAN

EVALUATE OUTCOME!

WHY AM I BEING SAFE?

WHY DO I LOOK OUT FOR MY CO-WORKERS?

BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO