



28 May 2018

Information about forestry fatalities

To help the forestry industry learn and become safer, WorkSafe has agreed to share information about forestry fatalities. WorkSafe's investigations into the incidents are continuing and they will inform us of any other key issues or trends as they come to light in the investigations.

Our thoughts are with the families and friends of the victims.

WorkSafe Notification of Forestry Fatalities

Date: 12 May 2018

Location: Awatere Valley, Marlborough

Person: 43-year-old logging contractor, sub-contracted to his brother's business, specialising in logging/sawmill and tree removal. Father of two teenage children.

Activity: After clearing some pines from around a dwelling a contractor moved to removing established trees from an old shelter belt on a farm/vineyard. Several loads had been extracted from the site to market by a local log transport company with more wood to be removed.

Terrain: Flat country, farmland and vineyard.

Circumstance: The faller was removing and cutting Eucalypts from the old shelter belt on a farm. Trees were large (up to approx. 1.5m diameter) and heavily pruned with large limbs. One Eucalypt was felled and while de-limbing it the worker was struck from behind by a falling dead spar of an adjacent tree. The spar has come from a large double leader of an adjacent tree. The incident happened on a Friday afternoon with the deceased working on his own. He was discovered a few hours after the incident by a log truck driver.

Date: 15 December 2017

Location: Uruti Valley, North Taranaki

Person: 68-year-old father of 3 adult children

Activity: An established woodlot harvesting contractor undertaking clear-fell ground-based logging of a substantial woodlot that was under the management of a significant forest management company.

Terrain: Steep papa hill country, steep track formed many years previous and currently used for area access on occasions. Fine weather, light winds.

Circumstance: For an as yet undetermined reason, the deceased has reversed his 20 tonne Komatsu bulldozer up an existing track not actively being used at that stage of the harvest. While doing so the machine has toppled over a steep incline coming to rest 89 metres down a ravine. At this point in its enquiries WorkSafe is unable to conclusively determine what exactly happened but the victim was found outside the cab. The machine was fitted with ROPS, FOPS and OPS protective structures and seatbelt.

Date: 12 December 2017

Location: Makara, Wellington

Person: 28-year-old father of young child

Activity: An established forest harvesting contractor undertaking clear-fell ground-based logging in a medium-sized forest managed by a forest management company operating in several regions in the North Island.

Terrain: Steep hill country, fine hot weather, no wind, unformed track.

Circumstances: The operator was winching a stem uphill using a track skidder CAT 527. The stem got caught up on a standing tree and would not unsnag. The operator repositioned the machine sideways across the slope in an effort to winch the stem across. As he began winching again the machine lifted on the uphill tracks and quickly rolled. It continued to roll 100m downhill coming to rest upright at the bottom of a gully. The operator was wearing a lap seatbelt and the machine had a certified operator protective structure. The track skidder was operating on a slope area that ranged from 19° - 28° gradient.

Date: 21 August 2017

Location: Tolaga Bay, Gisborne

Circumstances: It is reported that the worker hit his head falling off a hauler. Victim was reportedly a 23-year-old father of one.

WorkSafe says that unfortunately the factual circumstances of this incident are still unclear and remain under investigation. It is not yet in a position to release any further information.

Date: 17 August 2017

Location: Wairau Valley, Marlborough

Person: 20-year-old brother, keen hunter and fisherman

Activity: Ground-based harvesting crew

Terrain: Steep hill country of 35 degrees slope. Well-formed roads and tracks in use. On the day of the accident the road was ankle deep in wet mud on a solid rock base. The weather was cold with blustery winds and there had been rain in the morning.

Circumstances: A skidder was returning to pick up a drag along a well-formed 'track' formerly used by log trucks. The skidder has veered off the track and over the edge, rolling approximately 245 meters and coming to rest on a lower formed track. The skidder was equipped with chains on its front tyres, and no issues have been found with tyre condition. The operator was wearing a lap seat- belt and the skidder had a certified operator protective structure. WorkSafe is continuing to investigate this incident.

Date: 15 May 2017

Location: Northland, near Mataraua Road, Kaikohe

Person: 32-year-old father of two young children.

Activity: Tree felling. Contractor working for a small forest owner.

Terrain: Sloping terrain, with a drop off just below where the trees were being felled. We have been told of an abundance of rocks below the surface. A number of standing dead trees were noted in the surrounding area.

Circumstances: The person had been felling trees, ranging from 200mm to 500mm in diameter, uphill. After he failed to call in another faller went looking for him, and found him unresponsive, beneath a dead tree that had uprooted. His chainsaw was found in the off position, in a stump, after having the hinge wood cut through. We are currently unable to determine the exact cause of the incident at the stage.

Date: 12 April 2017

Location: Gisborne, Mangatu Forest

Person: 42-year-old father.

Activity: Harvesting - experienced feller starting to open up area for recovery. Contractor working for a corporate forest owner.

Terrain: Not difficult.

Circumstances: The incident happened while driving a tree onto a standing cut up tree. Approximately 15 trees had been felled prior to the incident.

Date: 16 March 2017

Location: Gisborne, Mangatu Forest

Person: 38-year-old father of 7 young children.

Activity: Thinning to waste. Contractor working for a corporate forest owner.

Terrain: Plateaus and gullies. The person was working uphill on a plateau. He was approximately 50 metres from another worker. They were in radio contact with each other and the other worker noticed that the person's chainsaw was idling and went to check and found him.

Circumstances: At this point in our enquiries we are unable to conclusively determine what exactly happened but the person was found on his face, head first down a small bank with a 6-8 metre 20cm stem diagonally across his shoulder and back area. 11 July 2017