



January 23, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: To all CAGC Members

FROM: Mike Doyle, President

RE: SEISMIC SLASHING FATALITY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

General Details

In the month of March 2003 a seismic slashing fatality occurred in B.C. A slasher was in the process of felling a (standing/rooted) tree, in order to fell another tree which was “hung-up” against it. Although the primary tree fell as intended, the second (hung-up) tree fell back towards the seismic line, striking a second slasher on the head, and sustained fatal injuries as a result.

Direct Causes

- Initial hazard of hang-up tree created in the clearing process, during cat operations, when the cat cut tree had been pushed up (still standing) into the slash pile.
- Slasher being left to remove hazard tree from the line.
- Communication between the two slashers of existing hazards & following of proper procedure.
- Responsibility of the faller to ensure that his/her falling area (within 2 tree lengths) is clear of personnel, before cutting/felling. First slasher assumed the other slasher was out of the area, and failed to conduct a proper site assessment.
- Actions of the second slasher who did not maintain an adequate distance from the active work zone/falling trees.

Indirect Causes

- First and second slashers being certain of the each other’s position, during falling activity. Reliance by the slashers to “hear” the proximity of other activity close to them, or within the falling area.
- Proof of individual slasher’s level of experience, for the level of slashing activity of which they were engaged.

Recommendations

- Review obligation of the equipment/cut operator, who is to remove hazards that are created in that phase of the operation (BC OHS Regulation 26.80, “Creating additional hazards”) and not leave those “hazards” for the slasher to remove.
- Reinforce the “Safe falling operations” (Chapter three) of the PITS Chainsaw Safety course manual, and applicable OH&S regulation. Review that workers have to be 2 tree lengths apart (minimum) when falling trees.
- Ensure checking of “Record of Chainsaw Operator Experience and Competency” by site management, prior to allowing slashers to engage in falling activity. This record is a tool to help site management to properly assess the level of competency an individual slasher must have prior to beginning work. This record is to be made available upon demand, by the individual slasher, as per the P.I.T.S. Chainsaw course instructions.
- Review the procedure for entering the falling area (within 2 tree lengths) which includes: (1) Signaling the faller before entering falling area (2) Signal is acknowledged by faller (3) The faller must then turn off his/her chainsaw, put it down and stand clear of saw/tree. If the tree has already started to be cut, then the faller is not to allow entry into falling area, until after the felling of tree is completed.
- Field supervisors to establish and practice, a pre-defined disciplinary procedure, to be applied to individuals who are not following established safe work procedures.
- Field management to develop and practice a record of observed work inspection. Visual observation of proper work practice being followed.

Mike Doyle, President