

FATALITY ALERT

– PRELIMINARY INFORMATION --

BCFSC # 2015-07-05 Fatality

On July 5th while falling a tree, a manual tree faller was struck by a second tree and fatally injured. He was working for the BC Wildfire Service near Sechelt.

Our condolences go out to the family and co-workers of the deceased worker.

WorkSafeBC, the BC Wildfire Service and the Coroner's Service are investigating this incident and the results will be released as soon as possible.

Although the details of this incident are still unknown, take the time to review the following safety information:

Danger Tree Falling Operations

- 1) When falling in a burned area, there may be areas that are too dangerous to work in. Consider alternate methods for falling the danger trees such as using mechanical logging equipment, blasting or adjusting the plan to avoid the areas all together.
- 2) It is common for falling trees to cause chain reactions with other trees, branches or rocks that then become the hazard. Partially burned trees are unstable and may come down without warning.
- 3) Smokey conditions reduce visibility and may hide hazards. Overhead hazards like dead tops, hung up branches or limb tied trees may not be visible.
- 4) Fuel, weather and topography determines wildland fire behaviour and may contribute to hazardous falling situations. Be cautious when falling danger trees in old, dead stands of trees, high wind situations or steep ground.

Wildland Firefighting Operations:

- 1) Conduct daily safety briefings when working on wildfires and include information on danger trees. For example: provide information on burn through time, locations and marking of danger trees, and additional hazards like steep slopes.
- 2) Follow good firefighting practices like LACES to help manage wildfire hazards:

Lookout – A lookout person will let firefighters know of any changes in the weather or site conditions. Lookouts can help danger tree fallers spot overhead hazards before the falling work begins.

Anchor – Always start at an established anchor point like a road. Working from a safe anchor position will help keep you from getting in the middle of a dangerous situation.

Communications – Have radio communications with your team. Be able to react immediately when a lookout warns of a new hazard.

Evacuation Route – Establish and practice using an escape route before you need it.

Safety Zone – The escape route should take you to a safe zone that is large enough to protect you and your crew from falling trees or from an unexpected fire blow up.

3) Be aware of complacency on fires of all sizes during all phases; particularly during non-threatening and uneventful periods.

Resources:

1) Working Around Danger Trees – A video from the US Forest Service

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9UzFS0jUiQ>

2) Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center

<http://www.wildfirelessons.net/home>

3) Wildlife Danger Tree Assessor Certificate: Wildland Fire Safety Module

<http://www.unbc.ca/continuing-studies/wildlife-danger-tree>