

HAZARD ALERT

SKIDDER ACCIDENTS INJURE AND KILL WOODWORKERS

In recent years, three woodworkers have been fatally injured, and several were seriously injured, when assisting a skidder operator on a conventional logging operation. In each instance, the skidder operator started to winch the load while a co-worker was still in the area.

During a winching operation, trees are pulled toward the skidder and can become snagged or pulled up against another tree, a stump or part of the skidder. Tension builds on the winching cables and the logs can either swing out to the side or over the skidder, striking anyone in the area with a very strong force.

These accidents can be prevented if some simple precautions are always taken.



Recommended Preventive Action

1. A skidder operator must not winch trees or logs until his co-worker is standing clear and has signaled the operator accordingly. The signalling should be done visually; however, when visibility is hampered, communication should be ensured with two-way radios or a horn. [General Regulation 91-191, paragraphs 357(3)(a&b)]
2. Anyone assisting a skidder operator should make sure that they are positioned at least twice the distance away of the longest log.
3. The operator must complete a full-circle or 360 degree check before engaging the winch.
4. Chokers should always be installed as close as possible to the end of the trees being winched.
5. Operators must ensure that the skidder brakes are engaged and the blade is lowered to increase stability before winching the load. It is unsafe to drive and winch at the same time. [General Regulation 91-191, paragraph 357(3)(e)]
6. Operators must ensure that the skidder brakes are in good working order. [General Regulation 91-191, paragraph 224(c)]
7. Employees working in the operation should wear high-visibility apparel such as an orange hardhat and/or a reflective vest.
8. Special precautions must be taken when working in select cut operations. This situation is inherently dangerous due to decreased visibility, greater risk of logs binding up against standing trees and a false sense of security that protection is offered by the presence of other standing trees. Make sure hazards are identified and that appropriate measures are implemented to ensure the safety of everyone working on these types of operations.

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