



8 March 2021

Information about forestry fatalities

To help the forestry industry learn and become safer, WorkSafe has agreed to share information about forestry fatalities. WorkSafe has prepared this information in discussion with the affected parties. 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, friends and crewmates of the victims.

WorkSafe Notification of Forestry Fatalities

PERSON: STEVE WHARE, 53 YEARS OLD, AN EXPERIENCED AND POPULAR MEMBER OF THE LOGGING CREW

Date: 26 January 2021

Location: Tinui Valley, near Masterton

Employer: Egmont Logging Ltd who were harvesting for Farman Turkington Forestry Ltd.

Activity: Machine assisted felling of a mature *Macrocarpa* shelter belt on farmland.

Terrain and conditions: At the time of the incident Mr Whare was clear-felling on the flat and it was clear underfoot. The weather was hot and sunny.

Circumstances: WorkSafe says indications are that Mr Whare had completed his cuts on a tree being held by a grapple. It appears as though the shelter belt was close cropped about 30 years old. It had a mean height of approximately 32m, with intertwined tops. It understands that Mr Whare retreated to a partially protected position 2 trees away. Following that, it appears that as the machine started to move to lower the cut tree, the top third of the tree next to it (intertwined top), has broken off, fatally striking Mr Whare. WorkSafe says its investigation is ongoing and the information above is as it understood events at the time of this update.

Risk Management: WorkSafe says the Health and Safety at Work Act requires those in control of, influencing, or arranging work, to do all that is reasonably practicable to protect workers and others from harm arising from that work. A principle of the Act is that workers should be provided the highest level of protection against harm to their health, safety and welfare from hazards and risks arising from

work. In high-risk situations this means understanding and applying the hierarchy of controls. If the risk cannot be eliminated, then the next step is to look for ways that the work can be done without risk before adopting measures to manage the risk. Where trees can be fully mechanically felled, they should be. Only where they cannot and must be felled should exposing a tree feller with a chainsaw to the risk be considered. Here are links to WorkSafe's position on the use of technology:
<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/laws-and-regulations/operational-policy-framework/worksafe-positions/use-of-new-technology>

PERSON: THE WORKER WAS AN EXPERIENCED AND QUALIFIED SERVICE TECHNICIAN FOR A FORESTRY PLANT MANUFACTURER/SUPPLIER

Date: 5 November 2020

Location: Putere Road, Wairoa.

Employer: The service company was engaged by Freedom Logging Ltd who were undertaking the harvest for Forestry Management NZ Limited.

Activity: Repairs to a log harvester head.

Terrain and conditions: The incident occurred on a skid site.

Circumstances: The circumstances of the worker's death remain under investigation. At the time of the incident the plant was not in operation as repairs were being undertaken. The plant had been energised prior to the incident.

Risk Management: Workers in New Zealand have been killed or seriously injured when machinery was energised while they were cleaning, maintaining or repairing it. Lockout prevents energy from being transmitted or released to machinery so it cannot be restarted (or cannot restart by itself) and cause death or serious injury to the person or people servicing the machinery. Machinery must be locked out safely and effectively before being serviced, if it is reasonably practicable to do so and if there is the potential for it to cause harm. The PCBU must have a safe and effective lockout procedure and must make sure workers are trained in the procedure or are supervised when they carry out the procedure.

For more information see the following WorkSafe guidance:

[Keeping workers safe with machine lockouts](#)

[Safe use of machinery](#)

PERSON: 56-YEAR-OLD SON, PAPA, UNCLE AND BROTHER, FALLER AND FISHERMAN (NAME WITHHELD ON REQUEST).

Date: 9 January 2020, late morning.

Location: Huiarua Forest, West of Tokomaru Bay.

Employer: Eastside Logging Company Limited, who were contracted by Ernslaw One.

Activity: Clear fell operation using a cable hauler in a large corporate forest block.
Terrain and conditions: The worker was felling trees on a slope. It was a cloudy, mild morning.

Circumstances: While completing felling cuts on a wind-wrenched tree, it was "barber chaired" resulting in the faller suffering fatal injuries. The worker was a very experienced qualified tree faller.

Risk Management: WorkSafe says that manual tree felling remains a high-risk activity in forests with 7 of the most recent 12 fatalities being of manual tree fallers. "Barber chairing" generally only occurs when a tree is under significant tension, one of the indicators of a "hazardous tree". Tree falling risks are further raised where windthrow or hazardous trees are involved. Much of this risk can be eliminated through mechanisation – WorkSafe says it is not aware of any fatalities involving mechanised tree fallers. See more on managing risks when tree felling:

www.competenz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/16090-Competenz-tree-felling-BPG.pdf
www.Safetree.org.nz

PERSON: RUSSELL OXNAM A 66-YEAR-OLD HUSBAND, FATHER, STEP-FATHER, GRANDFATHER, SON, BROTHER, LONG-TIME LOGGER AND TRANSPORT OPERATOR.

Russell was well-known among forestry crews and forestry management companies and, with a sizable logging transport company and a passion for bulldozers, he was well respected in the transport industry too.

Date: 8 October 2019

Location: Near Pohangina, Manawatu: Moar Block (Finnis Road)

Employer: Russell was the owner of Foxpine Logging Limited, who were contracted to John Turkington Limited.

Activity: Clearing windthrow in a medium size Forest Block.

Terrain and conditions: Russell was working on a moderately steep slope on a windy dry day.

Circumstances: While cutting a root plate from a windthrown tree, the root plate was dislodged and fell into a dip in the terrain pinning Russell against another tree resulting in fatal injuries. Work Safe's investigation into this incident is ongoing.

Risk Management: Manual tree felling remains a high-risk activity with six of the most recent 11 forestry fatalities being of manual tree fallers. This risk is even higher

where windthrow is involved. Much of this risk can be eliminated through mechanisation – WorkSafe is not aware of any fatalities involving mechanised tree felling.

PERSON: NATHAN PAIKEA, 45-YEAR-OLD PARTNER, FATHER, SON AND RETIRED MEMBER OF THE KAINGAROA VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Date: 21 August 2019

Location: Tututawa Forest, near Stratford, Taranaki

Employer: Mr Paikea was a contract faller employed by Skyline Harvest Systems Limited, which was contracted by Tree Awareness Management Ltd. (TAML)

Activity: Clear felling of a 233-hectare privately owned forest block in the Tututawa area.

Terrain and conditions: At the time of the incident Mr Paikea was clear-felling on a steep slope on a cool and overcast day.

Circumstances: While felling it appears Mr Paikea was driving a tree onto another and was stuck by a stem suffering fatal injuries. He was found by fellow workers after he had missed a scheduled 'call-in'. Mr Paikea had recently returned to work with the crew. WorkSafe's investigation into this incident is ongoing. Our thoughts are with his family, friends, crew and all those affected by this loss.

PERSON: NATAN (NATE) MILLER, 28-YEAR-OLD PARTNER, FATHER, SON AND TALENTED RUGBY LEAGUE PLAYER

Date: 13 February 2019

Location: West Ho Forest, Kokopu Road, near Tolaga Bay, Gisborne

Employer: Nate was employed by Pakiri Logging, who were contracted by Earnslaw One.

Activity: Felling of a Forest Block.

Terrain and conditions: Nate was breaking out on a moderately steep slope. It was fine and very hot.

Circumstances: Whilst breaking out Nate was stuck by a log and suffered fatal injuries. Further details are unavailable and WorkSafe's investigation into this incident is ongoing. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and crew.

Risk Management: Manual Breaking Out remains a high risk activity in forests. Some of these risks can be eliminated through mechanisation. Further

information about managing risks arising from Breaking Out can be found in the [Competenz Best Practice Guide](#) or at Safetree.nz

WorkSafe Notification of Forestry Fatalities 2018

PERSON: A 61-YEAR-OLD FARMER

Date: 27 November 2018

Location: Allport Rd, Paengaroa, Tauranga

Employer: The victim was the owner of the woodlot.

Activity: Felling of a farm woodlot.

Terrain and conditions: The woodlot is on hilly farm terrain. The old-man-pine being felled was positioned on the side of a valley ledge, adjacent to a drop of about 80m. The wind was gusty.

Circumstances: A farm worker with reported significant experience in forestry was assisting the victim with the felling. After felling cuts were completed the tree was held up by the wind and was entangled in a tree alongside. It appears that in an attempt to enable a machine to assist with felling, the victim climbed up into the tree. As he did so the wind dropped, releasing the tree which fell, fatality injuring him.

PERSON: CHRISTOPHER BODLEY, 28-YEAR-OLD PARTNER, FATHER, SON AND HUNTER

Date: 25 September 2018

Location: Ridge Road, Pohangina, Manawatu

Employer: Mr Bodley was a contract faller, contracting to Mangoihe Logging Ltd, who were contracting their services to John Turkington Ltd.

Activity: Felling of a forest block.

Terrain and conditions: Mr Bodley was falling in a gully in steep terrain. It was wet and cold.

Circumstances: After completing his felling cuts Mr Bodley retreated along his escape route which was partially obstructed by a wind-thrown tree. As he retreated, the wind-thrown tree collapsed crushing him.

PERSON: SHANNON DAVID OMLO, A 32-YEAR-OLD FATHER OF THREE CHILDREN

Date: 16 July 2018

Location: Trass Valley, Nelson

Employer: Mr Omlo was employed as a logger by C & W Logging Ltd, who were contacting their services to Nelson Management Ltd, under Nelson Forest Ltd.

Activity: Forestry operation, tree felling on a cable hauler site.

Terrain and conditions: The site had a moderate, but not excessive, slope with a degree of wetness underfoot due in part to several days' rainfall prior to the incident.

Circumstances: Mr Omlo was working alone felling pine trees, wearing appropriate PPE with a radio and man-down system in place. He was hit by a falling tree and found by his colleagues conscious but with head and leg injuries. He died while being transported by helicopter to Nelson hospital.

PERSON: LEVI GOODWIN, 26-YEAR-OLD WHOSE PARTNER WAS EXPECTING A CHILD

Date: 9th July 2018

Location: Pukehou Road, Bulls, Rangitikei

Employer: Mr Goodwin was employed as a forestry worker by Boyd Contracting Ltd, who were contracting their services to John Turkington Ltd.

Activity: Felling of a farm lot.

Terrain and conditions: The site was reasonably flat in an area exposed to the westerly winds.

Circumstances: Mr Goodwin was getting into a utility that was parked on a track that went through the farm lot. Trees each side of the track had been mostly cleared but two trees had been left standing about 30 metres from the track. One tree suddenly fell over as they were about to leave the site. The workers were leaving the site because of the weather conditions, including strong winds. Three people were involved in the accident. Aside from Mr Goodwin, who was struck as he was about to get into the ute, the person on the back of the ute was severely injured and the driver, while trapped in the cab, received minor injuries.

PERSON: 66-YEAR-OLD FATHER AND GRANDFATHER

Date: 5 June 2018, following an incident on 28 May

Location: Opouteke Forest, Dargaville

Activity: Pedestrian, vehicle collision.

Environment: Forest road beside a container hut used as office, rest room and store (located away from the skid site).

Circumstances: The victim was waiting by a shipping container hut located off the side of the road. Two other workers had driven down to the area to look for a part. The workers stopped to chat to the victim and then got back into the ute they were

using to drive back to their harvester. The vehicle reversed a short distance when the driver realised they had collided with something. They stopped and the passenger got out to see what they had struck. He saw the victim under the vehicle and instructed the driver to move forward clear of the victim. First aid was then administered and emergency services contacted. The victim was airlifted to Auckland Hospital.

PERSON: 43-YEAR-OLD LOGGING CONTRACTOR, FATHER OF TWO TEENAGE CHILDREN

Date: 11 May 2018

Location: Awatere Valley, Marlborough

Activity: After clearing some pines from around a dwelling, a contractor was 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 contractor sub-contracted to his brother's business, specialising in logging/sawmill and tree removal. 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 morning with the deceased working on his own. He was discovered a few hours after the incident by a log truck driver.

WorkSafe Notification of Forestry Fatalities 2017

PERSON: 68-YEAR-OLD FATHER OF 3 ADULT CHILDREN

Date: 15 December 2017

Location: Uruti Valley, North Taranaki

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 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.

PERSON: 28-YEAR-OLD FATHER OF YOUNG CHILD

Date: 12 December 2017

Location: Makara, Wellington

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 un snag. 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.

PERSON: VICTIM WAS REPORTEDLY A 23-YEAR-OLD FATHER OF ONE

Date: 21 August 2017

Location: Tolaga Bay, Gisborne

Circumstances: It is reported that the worker hit his head falling off a hauler. 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.

PERSON: 20-YEAR-OLD BROTHER, KEEN HUNTER AND FISHERMAN

Date: 17 August 2017

Location: Wairau Valley, Marlborough

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.

PERSON: 32-YEAR-OLD FATHER OF TWO YOUNG CHILDREN

Date: 15 May 2017

Location: Northland, near Mataraua Road, Kaikohe

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 feller 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.

PERSON: 42-YEAR-OLD FATHER

Date: 12 April 2017

Location: Gisborne, Mangatu Forest

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.

PERSON: 38-YEAR-OLD FATHER OF 7 YOUNG CHILDREN

Date: 16 March 2017

Location: Gisborne, Mangatu Forest

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.