

Safety Alert – Windthrow trees

Post this alert on your workplace noticeboards. Discuss it at safety or tailgate meetings.

February 2023

Recent cyclones have left a considerable amount of windthrow trees in North Island forests. Windthrow trees entangled with other trees can be under pressure and can react violently and unpredictably when cut. So, they need to be removed with extreme care.

Safe removal of windthrow trees

The ACoP includes information on to remove these trees safely, including that:

- In areas of windthrown salvage, machine-assisted felling must be the first choice of felling mechanism.
- Any manual faller required to work in windthrow must have their competency assessed against NZQA Unit Standard 1270.
- No one can work directly under wind-wrenched trees.

There is additional information in the *Tree-felling Best Practice Guide*, including that:

- The foreman and faller must complete a management plan before work is undertaken.
- Each windthrown tree needs to be assessed individually.
- No-one is allowed to work directly under wind-wrenched trees.
- Wherever possible, windthrow trees must be felled by machine, rather than manually.
- If a machine is used, the operator must be competent in windthrow salvage operations.
- Before starting, fallers must assess all possible movements of a standing tree or windthrown stem following release of tension or compression, and plan cuts accordingly.
- Faller fatigue and complacency must be closely monitored by the foreman.
- Fallers deemed competent to work in windthrow must receive refresher training if they have not felled windthrow trees within the last 12 months.
- Evidence of the competency of the fallers working in windthrow must be available on the worksite, including records of assessment and retraining.