

HAZARD ALERT

SKIDDER ACCIDENTS INJURE AND KILL WOODS WORKERS

In recent years, three woodworkers died and several were seriously injured while assisting a skidder operator on a conventional logging operation. In each instance, the skidder operator had 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 incidents can be prevented by following some simple precautions.



Recommended Preventive Action

1. A skidder operator must not winch trees or logs until the co-worker is standing clear and has signalled 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 ensure that they are positioned at least twice the distance away of the longest log.
3. The operator does a full-circle or 360 degree check before engaging the winch.
4. Always install chokers 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 should wear high-visibility apparel such as an orange hardhat and a reflective vest.
8. Take special precautions when working in select cut operations. This situation is inherently dangerous because of decreased visibility, greater risk of logs binding up against standing trees, and a false sense of security that other standing trees offer protection. Identify any hazards and take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of everyone working in these types of operations.