



# Alaska FACE Facts

Occupational Injury Prevention Program  
Section of Epidemiology  
Division of Public Health  
Department of Health and Social Services

November 1997

## Cutters killed in rebound incidents

During the 1997 timber season, two loggers died from injuries while cutting trees. In both incidents the cutters were struck by a rebounding log.

**Incident #1:** A logger (cutter) was killed when the trunk of the tree he was felling struck his head. The victim was part of a two-man crew cutting trees separately on a steep hillside. After clearing both the fall area and an escape route, the victim made a series of standard cuts to fell the tree. The tree did not show any external signs of rot, however heart rot was present in the tree's core. The tree twisted on its stump, falling in a different direction than intended and striking the side of an uphill stump. The victim was struck as the tree rebounded and swung toward him as it continued to slip to the side of the stump.

### **Recommendations:**

- Ensure cutters examine the tree before making a cut and inspect the chainsaw shavings and wood wedge from the undercut for any signs of rot which could influence the tree's direction of fall.
- Re-enforce the use of wedges to help control the fall of a tree.
- Consider eliminating the use of "swing cuts" when defective timber is present and adequate distance for an escape route is limited.

**Incident #2:** A logger (cutter) was killed while attempting to dislodge a previously felled tree. The victim was cutting the remaining trees in his strip on a steep hillside along a bluff. One tree fell over the rocky drop-off and became lodged in a lower stand of trees. The victim dropped to a narrow ledge to fell a second tree onto the first. Due to the steep terrain, the victim positioned himself toward the front

of the second to make the cuts. An escape route was not cleared. The tree fell and struck the first tree. However, the tree did not dislodge. The victim was struck as the tree rebounded and swung toward him as it pivoted on the first tree.

### **Recommendations:**

- Ensure cutters working on steep terrain fell trees according to safe methods. Cutters should fell trees uphill or on the same level where rolling or sliding is possible. In addition, cutters should always plan and clear an escape route that leads away from the direction of fall.
- Consider excluding trees that should not be felled for harvesting due to extreme terrain conditions.

The Alaska Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) program is administered by the Occupational Injury Prevention Program (OIPP), Section of Epidemiology, Department of Health and Social Services under a cooperative agreement with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. The purpose of FACE is to identify conditions that increase the possibility of work-related fatal injury and provide recommendations for countermeasures that can be developed and implemented by the employer.

**For more information or  
a copy of this FACE report, contact the  
Occupational Injury Prevention Office  
(907) 269-8000  
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