

## Logger Killed During Tree Felling

**Incident Number:** 97KY018  
**Date of Incident:** February 28, 1997  
**Report Release Date:** April 16, 1997



### SUMMARY

A 61-year-old male logger was killed when he was hit by the tree he was felling. On the day of the incident, he was working on a steep mountainside with his son and another logger. At approximately 10 am, the victim was felling a tree approximately 14 inches in diameter. As viewed from the bottom of the hill, a small tree about 6 inches in diameter stood about 6 feet to the right of the tree that was being felled. Lying on the ground directly behind those two vertical trees was a log 4-5 inches in diameter; it lay perpendicular to the hillside and the two vertical trees. When the victim finished cutting the tree, he stepped over by the small vertical tree and in front of the log that lay on the ground. As the tree fell, it came into contact with the side of another tree that was about 40 feet downhill and the cut end flew up and struck the victim. He was knocked to the ground and pinned underneath the tree as it landed across his abdomen. One of the loggers nearby witnessed the incident and went for help. He called 911 at the property owner=s home which was about one mile from the site. Rescue personnel were dispatched at 10:30 am and arrived within 15 minutes. The coroner pronounced the victim dead at the scene.

To prevent similar incidents from occurring, FACE investigators recommend:

- A clear escape path should be planned prior to felling a tree
- A hazard analysis of the area should be performed prior to felling a tree
- Loggers should attend the Master Logger Program for education regarding Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) logging standards and safety procedures

### **RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION**

**Recommendation #1:** A clear escape path should be planned prior to felling a tree.

**Discussion:** When felling a tree, two clear escape paths should be planned that are at 45 degrees back from the intended line of fall. The area directly behind the tree is the prime strike area for Abutt-jump@ injuries. Although the logger moved to the right side of the tree as it fell, and was out of the prime strike area, he did not have a clear path of escape. The tree standing nearby and the log lying on the ground did not allow for a rapid route of escape in the event of a dangerous situation.

***Recommendation #2:*** A hazard analysis of the area should be performed prior to felling a tree.

***Discussion:*** The path of the felled tree should be analyzed prior to beginning the operation. Planning to fell the tree in a direction that is clear or removing trees that could interfere with the felling provides a safer work environment and reduces the risk of injury for the feller and other loggers at the site. Even small trees present a risk of interfering with a planned felling. In this case, an assessment of the area would have indicated a risk of the felled tree coming into contact with the tree that was downhill.

***Recommendation #3:*** Loggers should attend the Master Logger Program for education regarding Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) logging standards and safety procedures.

***Discussion:*** Loggers should be aware of proper procedures and safety practices to ensure a safe work environment. For more information about the Master Logger Program, contact Larry Lowe at the Kentucky Department of Natural Resources (502-564-4496).