

# Safety Alert OF THE MONTH

PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS IN BC'S FOREST INDUSTRY

August 2016

## Forestry consultant seriously injured in Mountain Pine Beetle stand

A forestry consultant was struck by a falling tree while flagging a proposed road location in a stand dominated by dead, beetle killed pine. The worker was airlifted to hospital where it was determined that he had spinal, pelvic and shoulder fractures along with several broken bones in his foot.

On the morning of July 9<sup>th</sup> the worker and his co-worker entered the block to start locating roads and boundaries. The air was calm, with no significant breeze at any time. At approximately 9:10 am, the worker was flagging his proposed road location when he heard a tree “crack”. He knew it was close but could not identify its location so he attempted to hunker down beside a larger tree for protection. A deadfall pine, approximately 40cm in diameter (DBH), caught him in the back and pinned him to the ground, knocking his hard hat off and his radio out of his vest pocket. He knew he was hurt and needed to call for help so he scrambled out from underneath the tree, retrieved his radio, and called his co-worker for assistance.

The co-worker was approximately 500m away. He proceeded to the injured workers location, and stabilized the worker. He then departed to the pickup where the satellite phone was located.

The co-worker reached the pickup and contacted the company’s main office approximately 10:00 am. At this time BC Ambulance was contacted and paramedics and the local search and rescue group were dispatched to the site. The injured worker was eventually long-lined out of the woods by the 442 Transport and Rescue Squadron, at approximately 8:40pm, and transported to hospital.

The total elapsed time from contact with BC Ambulance to arrival at the hospital was **over 11 hours**. The complications of remote location, serious injury, and the hazards associated with operating rotary wing aircraft in close proximity to dead pine stands are extremely significant and contributed to the extended evacuation time for this incident.



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## Mountain Pine Beetle Stands

- Beetle killed stands are getting older and as a result, the trees are becoming more rotten and less stable.
- Complete a risk assessment of the stand and trees before and during operations. Be ready to walk away from an area if the conditions become too risky. Danger tree awareness training is useful for workers performing these types of risk assessments.
- Wind shutdown procedures should be followed when working in these stands. Anticipate that due to rot, some of these trees may come down even during calm conditions.
- Watch out for large amounts of blowdown in these stands. Slips and fall incidents are common when trying to climb, walk or crawl in these types of blowdown conditions. Avoid walking on the logs as the bark may be loose or slippery.



## Emergency Medical Evacuation

- Practice your Emergency Response Plan at least once per year by having a realistic drill. Practice packaging and transporting an injured worker out of the bush. Document the challenges and improve your emergency procedures so you'll be better prepared for the real thing.
- If air evacuation is part of your plan, meet with the local helicopter company to discuss items like radio frequencies, geographic coordinates to use, and helicopter constraints like weather, darkness and landing areas. Make sure to discuss the hazard of unstable trees that might be blown over by the helicopter's rotor wash.
- Local expertise is very important when evacuating an injured worker. Your best knowledge of the site and hazards is with the workers who are there every day. Make sure that this info is communicated to the Emergency Services who are responding to the scene and planning the best way to evacuate the injured worker.

## Additional Safety Resources:

1) Emergency Response Video from WorkSafeBC

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/videos/every-minute-counts-emergency-response-planning-in-forestry?lang=en>

2) Emergency response planning: 12 tips for an effective emergency response plan

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/books-guides/emergency-response-planning-12-tips?lang=en>

