

#9 Struck by tree – Inspection #1224203

A **72 year old male** employee was fatally injured when he was struck by a falling Poplar tree approximately 60 feet tall and 30 inches in diameter. On the day of the incident the victim was alone felling trees using a Stihl 460, 20 inch bar, chainsaw. Since there were no direct witnesses to the incident, it was determined through interviews and conditions at the scene that the victim may have been using the 30 inch diameter Poplar tree to knock down a second, partially felled, tree which had apparently become stuck on a still-standing tree. Once the victim cut the Poplar tree it may have teetered or seesawed on the stuck tree, causing the Poplar tree to swing back and strike the victim. It was determined that the victim did not plan a clear retreat path, did not perform a primary undercut parallel to the ground which serves to guide the direction the tree falls, and was standing by the tree as it was falling. All of these work practices did not protect the victim from a misguided falling tree.

Citation(s) as Originally Issued

A complete inspection was conducted at the accident scene. Some of the items cited may not directly relate to the fatality.

Citation 1 Item 1a

29 CFR 1910.266(d)(1)(iv)	<p>The employer did not provide, at no cost to the employee, and/or assure that each employee who operated a chain saw wore ballistic nylon leg protection or other leg protection which the employer had demonstrated provides equivalent protection.</p> <p>In that the employer did not ensure that an employee felling a tree with a chainsaw wore chaps.</p>
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Citation 1 Item 1b

29 CFR 1910.266(d)(1)(vii)(B)	<p>The employer did not provide, at no cost to the employee, and ensure that each employee wear face protection meeting the requirements of subpart I of Part 1910 where there was potential for facial injury such as, but not limited to, operating a chipper.</p> <p>In that the employer did not ensure that the employee who was felling trees with a chainsaw wore a face shield.</p>
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Citation 1 Item 2

29 CFR 1910.266(d)(6)(iii)	<p>Each employee performing a logging operation at a logging work site did not work in a position or location what was within visual or audible contact with another employee.</p> <p>In that the employer did not ensure that an employee felling trees was within visual or audible contact with another employee.</p>
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Citation 1 Item 3

29 CFR 1910.266(h)(2)(i)	<p>Before felling started, the feller did not plan and clear a retreat path.</p> <p>In that the employer did not ensure that an employee felling trees planned and cleared a retreat path that extended diagonally away from the tree. Small trees/saplings obstructed the retreat path from the 30 inch diameter, 60 foot tall tree that the employee was felling.</p>
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Citation 1 Item 4a

29 CFR 1910.266(h)(2)(v)	<p>An undercut was not made in each tree being felled.</p> <p>In that the employer did not ensure that an employee felling a Poplar tree (30 inch diameter, 60 feet tall) utilized the undercut method. The notch created by cutting a top cut and an undercut is critical in relation to encouraging the tree to fall in a particular direction, and to discourage the tree from splitting and/or kicking back.</p>
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Citation 1 Item 4b

29 CFR 1910.266(h)(2)(vii)	<p>The back cut was not above the level of the horizontal face cut in order to provide an adequate platform to prevent kickback.</p> <p>In that the employer did not ensure that an employee felling a Poplar tree (30 inch diameter, 60 feet tall) cut a sufficient back cut above the previously cut horizontal face cut the employee cut a horizontal face cut, and then a horizontal back cut along the same plane.</p>
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Photo 1 of 1: The yellow circle indicates the larger Poplar tree that struck the victim. The blue arrow indicates the smaller tree that was previously felled, and did not drop to the ground. The red arrow indicates the tree that the smaller tree possibly became wedged into, before the larger Poplar tree was felled by the victim.