

# Tree Strikes You're Out

## Introduction

Snags are dead or dying trees. Hazard trees can be dead, dying, or green trees that are unstable. Over the years many people who have worked in the wood have been killed or injured in accidents involving hazard trees. On the Plumas, and elsewhere in western forests, snags are becoming an ever-increasing hazard after years of draught, fire exclusion, and bug kill. Because of safety concerns, a committee has been formed to study this problem and develop ways to help employees become more aware of this issue. Results of a forest survey indicate that many people have had accidents or close calls due to snags and other hazard trees.

This pamphlet has been developed, with information from the National Snag Hazard Task Force and others. We hope to increase awareness and educate employees about the dangers of hazard trees and how to work safely in the woods. The information in this pamphlet will help employees to:

1. Recognize indicators that will identify hazard trees.
2. Identify what work situations could put employees in danger (Watch-Out Situations)
3. Apply appropriate safety guidelines.

Fact: There are several million snags on the Plumas.

Fact: All these snags will come down.

Question: Will you be under one when it comes down?

## Hazard Tree Indicators

- Numerous downed trees.
- Leaning trees.
- Dead or broken tops and/or limbs hanging in the trees.
- Absences of needles, bark, or limbs.
- Possible of rot indicated by conks, broken tops, basal scars, cat faces, numerous down limbs, ants, abundance of woodpecker holes.
- Stump holes burning in the area.
- Smoke or fire burning in the base or tops of either dead or live trees may indicate rot and / or weakening of tree.

## Watch Out Situations

- Snags are falling or have fallen in work area.

- The area is occupied by trees that are susceptible to rot, especially white fir and old oak trees.
- Working or taking a break in a hazard area.
- Working in a hazard tree area for more than a few minutes.
- Working in hazard tree area during windy or potentially windy situations.
- Working in an area with trees that have been burning for an extended period.
- Tailgate safety session did not include discussion of snags.
- Lookouts are not posted or do not have communications in a hazard tree area.
- Becoming complacent in a hazard tree area.
- Too many snags for posted lookouts to keep track of.
- Tree within fire will fall over control line.
- Escape routes pall through hazard tree area.
- Safety Zones exposed to hazard trees.
- Parking in hazard tree area.
- Crew fatigued from being on shift for an extended period.
- Working around heavy equipment or tree felling operation in a hazard tree area.
- Unable to see top of trees.
- Steep slope with hazard trees above you.
- Nighttime work in area not scouted in daylight.

## Safety Guidelines

- Assess snag hazards before parking, taking breaks, or sleeping.
- Make sure that employees wear personal protective gear at all times.
- Use every day examples to brief and train employees about what snag hazards look like.
- Consider suspending operations during windy periods.
- Allow adequate time for scouting.
- Identify; tree species common to work area especially those that are more susceptible to heart rot, root rot, or shallow roots.
- Scout for hazard trees and visibly mark or flag individual and groups of snags that are in or near work areas.
- Post lookouts in areas of known or potential snag hazards.
- When possible, use work tactics which avoid or minimize employees exposure to snag hazards.
- All crewmembers have the responsibility to speak out when confronted by snag hazards.
- Discuss and plan escape route and safety zone considering vegetation and terrain.
- Assess the height of treetops when planning safety zone and escape routes.
- Fire Safety Zones must be free of hazard tree threat.
- Use extra caution when down hill of hazard trees. It is more common for trees and debris to go down hill.

- When escaping the path of a falling tree, do not turn your back- Watch the tree as you move out of its way to ensure you can see any change in its fall or roll caused by contact, breakage, etc.
- Use extra precaution during night operations.
- Determine if the benefit is worth the risk.

## SNAG SAFETY

Size up snag hazards in work area.

Never become complacent.

Always look up.

Get weather reports.

Scout out parking, sleeping, work areas, and safety zones.

Advice co-workers of known hazards.

Face your hazard and take appropriate action.

Examine work area for other hazards.

Take extra caution around heavy equipment.

You are ultimately responsible for your own safety.