



Rope too short for back-pulling

INCIDENT

A skidder operator was fatally injured while back-pulling trees.

CIRCUMSTANCES

The skidder was being used to back-pull cut-up trees. A rope was attached to one tree and was fully extended. The skidder was positioned directly in line with the intended direction of fall. As the operator got off the skidder, the tree being back-pulled, as well as two other trees that had been scarfed and cut up, were released from the tow rope and fell onto him.

INVESTIGATION

The skidder was too close to the trees being back-pulled because the rope was too short. The operator should not have climbed off the skidder until he had completed the operation. Although he had 10 years' experience in bush work, he had no training or experience in operating a skidder. The operator fractured his pelvis and later died from his injuries.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR ADVICE

Ensure all persons are competent, trained or under training for all work being carried out.

Rules as stated in the: *Approved Code of Practice for Safety and Health in Forest Operations*.

MACHINE-ASSISTED FELLING

Rule

Where machine-assisted felling is required, the machine may work within one tree-length of the tree being felled provided that:

- The machine shall be of sufficient size to handle all aspects of the operation;
- The faller and the machine operator shall have an effective means of communication;
- When using rope pulling, the rope shall be secured as high as practicable on the tree;
- The machine shall not be in the direct line of the intended direction of fall.

Note: This material has been prepared using the best information available to the Department of Labour at the time of publication. Information may change over time and it may be necessary for you to obtain an update. This material is also only intended to provide general advice and does not constitute legal advice. You should make your own judgement about action you may need to take to ensure you have complied with your workplace health and safety obligations under the law.

