



SAFETY ALERT

MECHANISED HEAD R&M

While the productivity and practical safety gains are well recognised of mechanised processing and felling heads, their R&M does account for an increasing proportion of near miss and minor injuries (predominantly due to increasing uptake of the technology). As such a refresher on procedures around this is worth re-capping as recently we have been party to an incident which could have resulted in an injury which **could** have been at the extreme end of the scale. Along with this incident we have had other incidents with R&M which have further prompted this advice.

INCIDENT OUTLINE

A logging contractor had recently purchased a new harvester head (to replace an old processing head) and had an experienced operator using this. During the course of its use a fault developed that required service advice and attendance from the supplier (as it was still within warranty). The service manager promptly drove to the site (several hours away) and arrived around midday just as the crew was having smoko. The owner of the crew assisted the service manager in rectifying the fault so that it would be ready for use after smoko (the rest of the crew proceeded with smoko).

During the course of the repair the service manager was assessing the head (while in use) and moved position to view it from a different angle. At the same time the crew owner inadvertently pressed the wrong button on the joystick (remember he was not the daily operator) and feed through the log that was in the head, which then exited the head clipping the service manager at about head height, which luckily only required first aid. However, the result could have been far different.

FACTORS AFFECTING INCIDENT

The service manager had **“driven a long way (several hours)”** and arrived around midday smoko break.

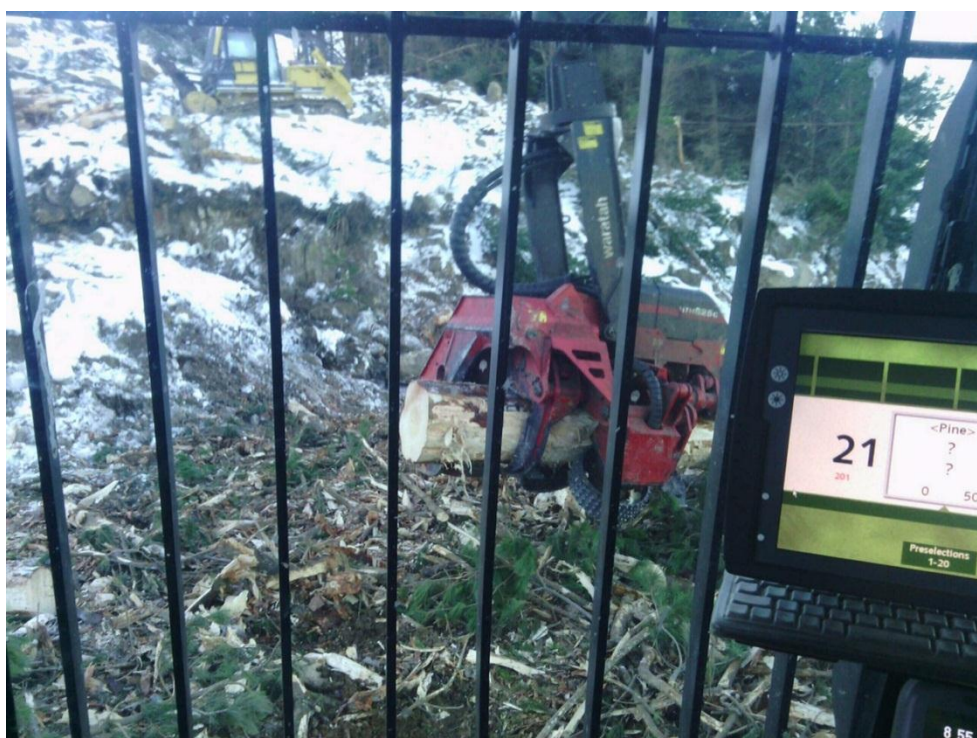
The crew owner was not the regular operator of the machine but was **“familiar”** with its use.

No direct **“communication”** between the two, other than possible hand signals (no RT use was evident).

Harvester head height may have obscured the service manager as he walked around it viewing its operation.

Harvester head height at or about the same height as the service manager’s head could have been catastrophic.

Image 1. Harvester head from the cab with limited visibility.



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WHAT IS RECOMMENDED (ACoP, BPG's, service instructions)?

ACoP 6.3 Mechanised Processors

6.3.1 All harvester heads shall be locked or supported and the cutting unit deactivated when any new maintenance is carried out.

ACoP 6.5 Maintaining Mobile Plant

6.5.3 Maintenance tasks on mobile plant while the engine is running shall only be completed by a competent or qualified person. Where maintenance is completed by two or more people, one person shall take responsibility.

BPG Maintenance Procedures

The machine is in a safe area and on flat, clear ground.

The machines hydraulic lock-out lever is engaged (if fitted) and the engine is shut down.

The head is either grounded or chocked up to prevent it from falling.

The computer control is turned to the "OFF" position (or to "MANUAL" if an authorised serviceman requires pressure to the head for diagnosis).

Waratah Manual H625c

Stay clear of moving parts – stop engine before examining, adjusting or maintaining any part of the harvester head with moving parts.

Keep clear of saw – servicing the harvester head with the harvester's engine running is extremely hazardous. Turning off the carrier's engine removes the hydraulic power to the harvester head and makes it safe for servicing.

Lock tilt bracket – servicing the harvester head is extremely hazardous. Always use the locking pin provided to prevent the harvester head falling over.

Pinch area – keep away from pinch area. The harvester head can shift or move unpredictably.

Maintenance and service safety – outline of Waratah key switch control operation which could have a third option of an "AUTO" setting. NB: When you must service the harvester head with carrier machine running, follow proper reference manual for all operation details. Understand service procedures being performed before beginning adjustments.

Other points to consider when undertaking R&M work on a live machine is a plan/procedure (where more than one person working), an agreed safe zone that allows serviceman to assess the machine without endangering himself. Also, consider using a further crew member (in radio contact) as a "buddy person" with the serviceman if the situation warrants it. Lastly, make sure that whoever is in the machine has had a machine induction and, more importantly, inducted for the task.

Thanks to Waratah NZ Ltd for providing information around their H625c harvester head.