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SAFETY ALERT

05-S-4

GRAPEVINE PULLS DEAD LIMB ONTO FELLER

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www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/05-s-4.html

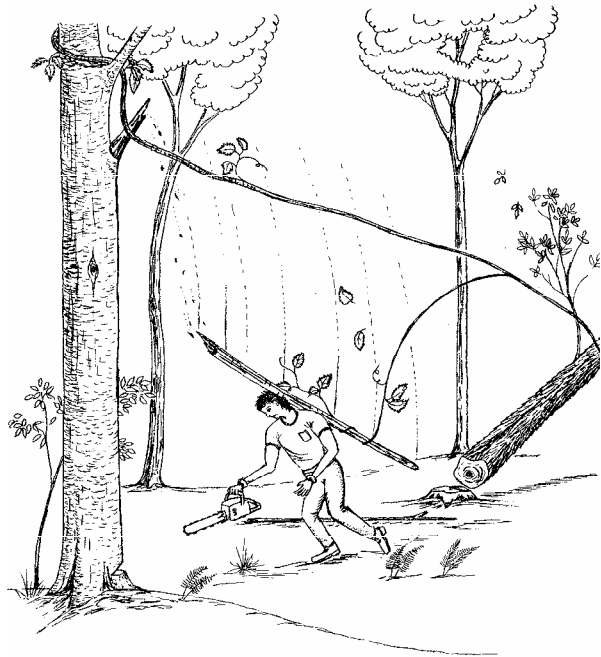
BACKGROUND: A timber cutter was working alone cutting and skidding on a summer day in the Appalachians. He was in the process of felling a 100-foot-tall cherry tree.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS: The 43-year-old timber cutter was working for a company that had been in the timber harvesting business for over 10 years. The timber cutter had five years of logging experience. He had completed his state's logger training and education program, which had included safety training. He was not wearing any personal protective equipment on this day.

UNSAFE ACTS AND CONDITIONS: After completing a face notch on the cherry tree, evidence suggests that the timber cutter walked approximately 34 feet downhill to fell a hickory tree which would have obstructed the fall path of the cherry tree. Grapevines entangled the top of the hickory with the top of the cherry tree.

ACCIDENT: As the hickory fell, the timber cutter walked back uphill toward the cherry tree. As he did, grapevines which connected both trees pulled a dead limb down from the cherry tree, striking the timber cutter on the top of his head.

INJURY: The timber cutter's son, who was waiting at the landing for a log truck to arrive, eventually realized that the chain saw had been idling for an abnormally long period of time after he heard the hickory fall. He walked to the cutting site and discovered his seriously-injured father. He went to a house in the area to call 911. The timber cutter died at the scene.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:

- Employers should ensure that tree fellers properly evaluate trees in the area immediately *prior to* felling so that potential hazards, such as dead limbs and vine-entangled trees/limbs, can be identified and appropriate control measures implemented. Danger trees should be removed by mechanical means, or the area should be bypassed.
- Employers should ensure that tree fellers prepare an escape path and move diagonally in a safe direction away from the base of the tree as it is falling. Had the tree cutter retreated at an oblique angle back from the expected fall line instead of walking directly uphill toward the cherry, he might still have avoided being struck.
- Employers should ensure that tree fellers wear all required personal protective equipment, including a hard hat.

Reviewed by:

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Please follow equipment manufacturers' recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.