

## INCIDENT FACTS

### REPORT #:

22MI079

### REPORT DATE:

March 21, 2023

### INCIDENT DATE:

July 19, 2022

### WORKER:

23-year-old

### INDUSTRY:

Forest Nurseries and  
Gathering of Forest  
Products

### OCCUPATION:

Field Worker

### EVENT TYPE:

Struck by



The fallen tree laying on the ground.

## Field Worker Struck by Falling Tree

### SUMMARY

A 23-year-old field worker died when he was struck in the head by a 40-foot-tall dead tree. The field worker was working his first day in the blueberry field, which was a side job for him. His primary job was at a cannabis farm. A berry buyer normally purchased the picked blueberries from this farm but this year the farm was not doing the field work. The berry buyer had purchased the harvest rights for the blueberries from the farm and put word out that harvesting work was available. On the day of the incident, 18 workers were onsite. This included the field worker, his brother, and a coworker from his primary job, the latter of which introduced him to the opportunity.

The decedent's coworker was hired by the berry buyer to be onsite. His duties were supervising the weighing of the berries, stacking totes, and distributing payment at the end of the day. The field workers were paid by the pound of picked blueberries. The picked blueberries were placed in totes and taken to a location on the edge of the field near the wood line to be weighed. The field worker had worked for about 1 hour and 40 minutes that day when he was in the process of getting his tote weighed. At approximately 6 p.m., one of the other field workers yelled "Look out!" and the 40-foot-tall dead tree fell, striking the field worker on the head causing him to go immediately unconscious. He was transported to a local hospital by emergency medical services where he was hospitalized. He was declared dead two days later.

The weather at the time of the incident was 86 degrees Fahrenheit, and the wind was out of the south at 9 miles per hour.

### REQUIREMENTS

#### Employers must:

- Furnish a place of employment that is free from recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to an employee. See [408.1011 \(a\): Act 154](#)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### MIFACE investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Conduct job hazard analyses that address both the hazards associated with worker related tasks and job-site hazards.
- Provide daily reminders to ensure that workers are aware of all job hazards and safety procedures.
  - Working outdoors can present a unique set of hazards. Hazards such as extreme heat and cold, sun exposure, weather related emergencies, poisonous plants, stinging insects, and tick-borne diseases are among those that should be addressed.
- Evaluate the employer/employee relationship to determine the responsibility for safety management. All parties must ensure safe working conditions. If an employer/employee relationship is established, the employer, whether the farm, the business, or the labor contractor, should ensure that the firm(s) complies with applicable MIOSHA rules and regulations.

### CITATIONS

#### MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following serious and other-than-serious citations at the conclusion of its investigation.

- Other-than-serious: 408.22139(1): ADM Part 11, Recording and Reporting of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses
  - A work-related fatality that was not reported to the MIOSHA within 8 hours after the death.

[MIFACE](#) (Michigan Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation), Michigan State University (MSU) Occupational & Environmental Medicine, 909 Fee Road, 117 West Fee Hall, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1315.

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