

Case 319. 34-year-old co-owner of a logging business died when he was struck by a previously cut 22-inch diameter, 40-foot long tree limb.

A 34-year-old male co-owner of a logging business died when he was struck by a previously cut 22-inch diameter, 40-foot long tree limb. The decedent was felling white pine trees with a chainsaw. The decedent unsuccessfully attempted to fell Tree 1. In an attempt to assist Tree 1 to fall, using a “domino effect”, the decedent cut a limb from Tree 2. This 22-inch diameter, 40-foot long, curved limb on Tree 2 was approximately 2 feet off the ground. The limb was dropped onto Tree 1 but did not cause Tree 1 to fall. The decedent returned to Tree 1, positioned himself under the limb, and again began to make cuts on the tree. When Tree 1 finally fell, the decedent was struck by the limb from Tree 2. His coworker (co-owner) was operating a skid steer dragging trees and clearing brush and had not checked on decedent for 10-15 minutes. His coworker heard the decedent’s chainsaw idling. He ran to the decedent’s work area and found him under the limb. The co-owner’s cell phone was unable to connect with emergency response so he ran to a nearby residence and used the home’s land line. Emergency response arrived and the decedent was declared dead at the scene.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following Serious citation at the conclusion of its investigation.

Serious: LOGGING, PART 51, RULE 5153:

An employee worked under a lodged tree.

(Employee under a lodged tree while cutting the tree that the lodged tree was hung up in)