

Case 375. 48-year-old landscape worker died when he was struck by a tree trunk he had felled.

A 48-year-old male landscape worker died when he was struck by a tree trunk he had felled. The decedent was standing in the crotch of a 50-foot-tall willow tree which had four multi-stemmed trunk sections. One of the tree sections had already been removed. The incident occurred during the removal of the second trunk section. This section was approximately 30 inches in diameter and still had its branches. The decedent was using a gas powered chain saw with a 16-inch bar. He was standing in the crotch of the tree approximately 7 feet above the ground. The decedent had not notched the trunk which had a very slight lean away from him prior to making the back cut. While making the back cut, the tree splintered (barber-chaired) and kicked back, landing on his chest pinning him in the crotch of the tree.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following Serious citations to the employer at the conclusion of its investigation:

SERIOUS: TREE TRIMMING AND REMOVAL, GI PART 53

- RULE 408.15311(a): An employer shall provide training to each new employee regarding the requirements of this standard, the job hazards and safeguards before starting his assigned job. A job briefing shall be conducted before any tree job involving unusual hazards is begun.

(There was no training provided to employee regarding tree felling operation procedures per general industry standard part 53, Tree Trimming and Removal. Fatality on *date removed by MIFACE* when employee was crushed by the tree he was felling as it split on the back cut and landed atop of him. The feller had no clear path of retreat, did not make an undercut or notch prior to the back cut; and evidence of plunge cutting was observed per photos. The employer stated that he did not know how to fell a tree and did not train the deceased employee because he had operated a chain saw and had cut down trees previously.)

- RULE 408.15313(2): Head protection shall be provided and used, as prescribed in general industry safety standard, Part 33. Personal Protective Equipment, being R 408/13301 et. Seq. of the Michigan Administrative Code, by an employee working on any operation covered by this part.

(The employee was not wearing head protection while felling a dead willow tree while standing in the crotch of the tree.)