

Work Around Live Power Lines!



Electricity Hazards – Are we taking them seriously? Work around live power lines is nothing new; indeed some contractors have developed great expertise in this field.

These contractors will tell you that successful ‘work around live power lines’ starts with meticulous hazard identification and planning; it involves early and regular communication with all stakeholders and careful observance of the rules – including those found in the **Safe Op – Working Near Live Power Lines**.

Notwithstanding, a good number of contractors have had instances of contact with live power lines – a real cause for concern! Fortunately, these events have not resulted in harm or injury – likely a matter of good luck!

Recently, several such contacts have us on high alert. In one, a thinning contractor downed a line, which started a small fire. Another crewmember saw the fire, but oblivious to the cause received a shock while he was trying to put the fire out.



Investigation and Learning!

- Complete a thorough reconnaissance of the work area – identify all the hazards and risks.
- Plan thoroughly, supervise diligently – do not leave anything to chance!
- Know the rules for work around live power lines – do not think that you know better!

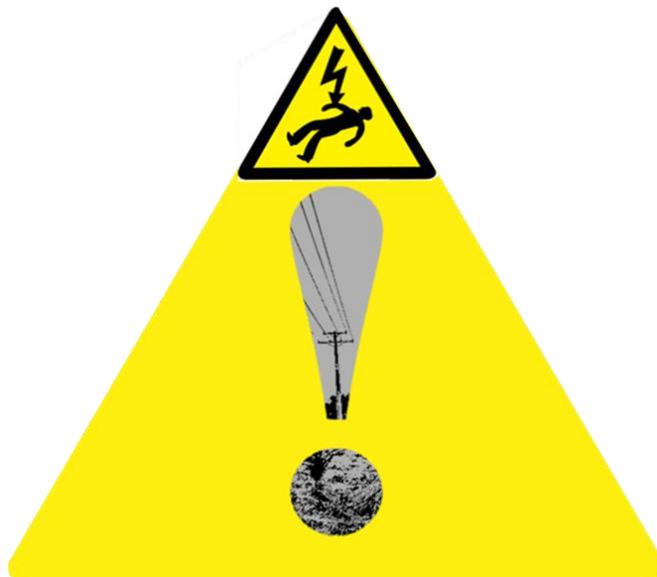
Are We At The Top Of The Triangle?

Checks and maintenance!

The risks associated with a machine fire are enormous – they can cause serious harm as well as major forest fire with costs running into the millions of dollars!

When a machine catches on fire, it can be very difficult to extinguish especially if not caught immediately. Losing a specialised machine can prove very costly – and drive up the cost of insurance.

A spate of recent fires has reinforced the importance of checks and maintenance.



FIPS 7530, 31/11/15 – Property Damage Incident

A machine operator was about to lay out fresh stems for processing when he noticed the hydraulics had stopped working. Turning the machine off, the operator then got out to look around and noticed smoke coming from under the bonnet. Responders arrived and turned off the isolation switch and extinguished the fire. They discovered that the battery lead (running from the starter motor) had been rubbing against the frame, which caused the fire. They also discovered that this is a ‘known issue’ for the type of machine!

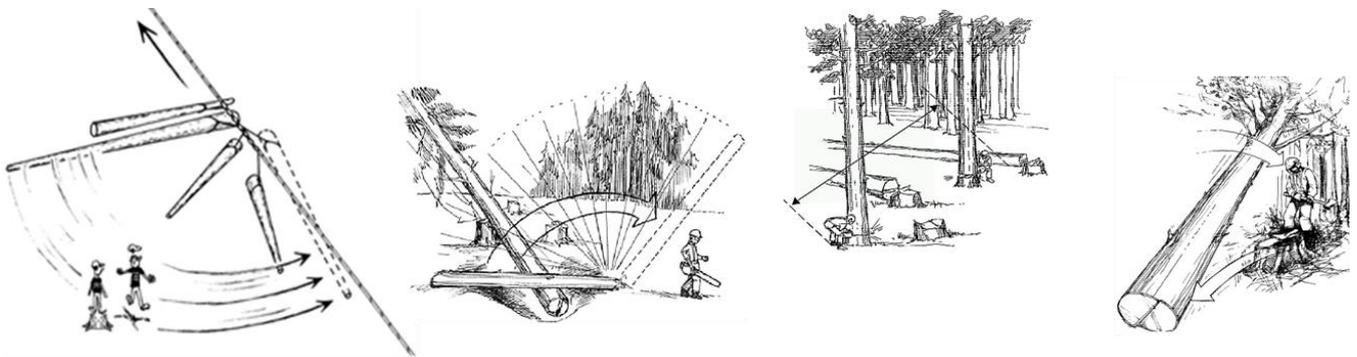
Learning from this... Machine Operators, have you checked?

- [] the fire extinguishers – ensuring they are fully charged and properly secured?
- [] machine servicing – has occurred according to the schedule?
- [] for oil leaks - removing waste-oil along with debris build-up?
- [] for evidence of rubbing and/or shorting along the electrical wiring, loom and leads?
- [] that the ‘fire-response plan’ works – a fire requires an **immediate response!**
- [] to see how quickly everyone can respond to a fire – run a practice drill and find out!
- [] that the ‘isolation switch’ has been turned off at the end of each shift?
- [] with your machine supplier for ‘known issues’ on the type of machine you operate?

Breaking-out and tree felling!

The **ACoP Safety and Health in Forest Operations** – (s.12, page 81) states that the “...the contractor/employer shall have a documented process to determine and identify the safe retreat position for each line or days’ work...” (12.2.23) and ...including the head breaker-out... “shall ensure the process is understood, agreed and carried out...”

The rules for tree felling (s11, p. 68 – 74) are as strict and while not specifically stated, we generally accept there will be equivalent ‘documented processes’ that are ‘understood, agreed and carried out’ by the people completing manual tree felling!



Processes in Place to Protect People!

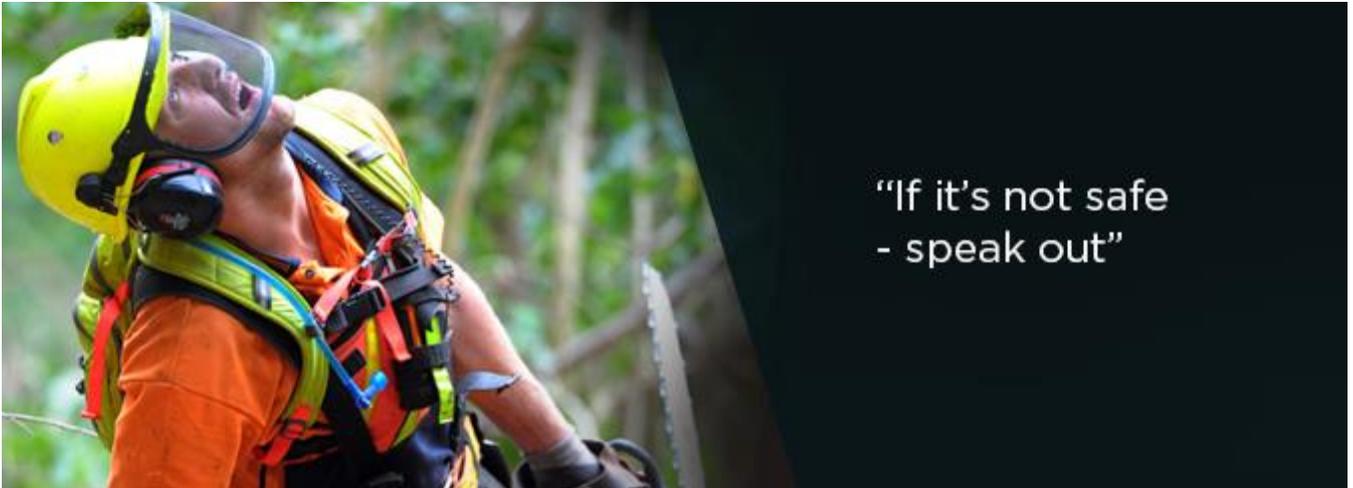
The figures above, clearly demonstrate that breaking-out and tree felling continue to be among the **most hazardous of all forest operations**, including felling in silviculture!

Re-commencing operations in 2016, employers (contractors) and workers, particularly those in positions of responsibility, must be acutely aware of their supervisory responsibilities and remain ever vigilant to ‘carry-out’ the ‘agreed’ processes!

Warning Shot Fired! On the **26th of August 2015**, a ‘gut-hooked’ stem upended, swung toward and struck a trainee breaker-out. Both he and his head breaker-out were not in the Safe Retreat Position! Following its incident investigation, WorkSafe NZ:

- Has found that the “documentation” of the contractor’s “health and safety system” was a “credit” to them and **will take no further action against the contractor.**
- Has **recommended the prosecution of the head breaker-out** (under s. 19 of the HSE Act) who will subsequently appear in court early this year.

A good practice guideline for worker engagement, participation and representation at work.



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Why Focus on Worker participation?

Workers have the detailed knowledge and experience of how work is done. This means that workers can help their employer, a person in charge of a business or undertaking (PCBU), to make better decisions. With knowledge and experience, workers can also help the PCBU to prioritise the health and safety matters that need to be addressed in the workplace.

The **Health and Safety at Work (HSW) Act** emphasises (in part 3) that everyone has a role to play in making sure workplaces are healthy and safe. It shows that there are two key duties for a PCBU; namely:

1. **Engagement** with workers; and
2. Worker **participation practices**

You can read more about these **'twin duties'** in the 'summary document' that includes the one-page graphic entitled "Worker Engagement and Participation at a Glance", issued with this safety bulletin.

During the early part of 2016 PF Olsen Ltd will consider the suggested ways to provide our wider workforce with the "opportunities to influence and shape their working conditions and systems".

In the meantime, and having read the summary document, employers and workers alike may want to give consideration to representatives, safety committees and participations practices.