

Oregon Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (OR-FACE) Logging Fatality Investigations

Forestry worker in vehicle killed from timber falling activity

On November 4, 2014, a 55-year-old log quality specialist employed by a timber leasing organization was killed when her vehicle was struck by a tree that was cut by a faller. This occurred within an active logging area that included cable yarding at the southeast end of the unit, and active timber falling at the northwest end of the unit. The faller was working at the northwest end and uphill from the road. A single cable flagger associated with the cable yarding at the southeast end allowed the log quality specialist to drive under the cable and proceed northwest. Shortly after she passed under the cable, she was met by the owner of the logging company who was driving from the northwest end toward the southeast end of the unit. During this stop, the log quality specialist and logging company owner had a brief conversation. The owner was the only witness to the conversation, and his report of what he said was limited and ambiguous. The logging company owner then left to perform some work at the east end of the site. A witness indicated the log quality specialist waited at the location of this encounter for at least 20 minutes before proceeding to the northwest, driving toward the timber falling activity. There were no warning signs or flaggers present in advance of the active falling area. The faller working at the northwest end cut a tree that fell downslope and into the road, 135 degrees from its intended lay. He went down to clear the tree from the road and discovered a vehicle had been struck by the tree and come to rest further down the road. He discovered the log quality specialist severely injured in her vehicle and called 911. First responders arrived within about 30 minutes but pronounced the log quality specialist dead at the scene.

Driver killed when ejected from logging truck

In January 2014, a 39-year-old driver was killed when he was ejected from the cab of a logging truck after it veered off the haul road into a canyon. The driver had left a landing with a load of logs at about 5:30am. There were reports of dense fog in the area until about 7:30am. Shortly thereafter, about ½ mile from the landing, another truck driver noticed tire tracks that trailed off the main haul road into a steep canyon. He then saw the wrecked truck and trailer below. The driver was found next to the rear axle of the truck, approximately 150 yards below the road. There were no skid marks or steering corrections indicated by the tire tracks suggesting that the driver inadvertently drove off the road after encountering the dense fog condition.

Timber faller killed while working under a hung tree limb

On December 29, 2011, a 41-year-old Hispanic male was killed while working as a timber faller. The incident occurred at about 1pm on a workday. The victim, working as a lone faller, was attempting to fell a tree that had an alder limb hung up in it. The alder limb was approximately 34 feet in length

and 11 inches in diameter. The victim's cutting partner was working on a separate strip of timber approximately 400 to 500 feet away. Witness accounts state that they had observed the hung alder limb in the victim's cutting strip about two hours prior to the incident. The victim was found underneath the alder limb and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Rigging slinger killed by swinging log in yarding turn

A 30-year-old logger, working as a rigging slinger in a yarding operation, was killed when he was struck by a swinging log in a moving turn. He was setting chokers out in front of the turn when the chokersetter working with him was ready to send a turn to the landing. He told the chokersetter to signal to go ahead on the turn, though he was still out front, within 15-25 feet of the turn. As the turn moved, the end of a 37-foot log dug into a bank, and swung into the air and crashed down on the rigging slinger.

Logger killed under rigging when carriage drops

A 45-year-old logger, working as a chokersetter in a skyline yarding operation, was killed when he was crushed by the skyline carriage. The chokersetter was new to logging, 1 week on the job, and was working under supervision. The carriage returned down the skyline from the landing, and as soon as the stop whistle sounded, the chokersetter rushed in to grab the chokers lying in the brush under the carriage. The carriage was 8-10 feet overhead and was still rolling a bit. The yarder engineer was just in the process of setting the mainline brake when the line suddenly slackened. The carriage dropped and crushed the chokersetter, killing him instantly. The medical examiner reported the victim's blood alcohol content at .02.

Young logger killed when yarder topples during setup

On May 2, 2006, a 23-year-old logger, working as a chaser, was killed when a yarder tipped over and crushed him. The crew was setting up the yarder on a new logging corridor and was in the process of tightening the guylines. The chaser and the siderod (site foreman) worked together to spool the guylines onto guyline drums at the rear of the yarder. The chaser worked on the deck of the yarder on the top two drums, while the siderod worked from the ground on the bottom two drums. As the fourth and final guyline was being spooled, the siderod heard a coworker yelling, and saw the man motioning with his arm over his head, indicating the yarder was going over. He took off running and just made it past the tracks when the yarder toppled backward over the steep hillside. Still on the deck of the yarder, the chaser ran toward the cab, but did not manage to get inside before the yarder went over. The yarder operator inside the cab emerged with minor injuries.

Log truck driver killed when brakes fail on steep road

On April 19, 2006, a 42-year-old log truck driver was killed when he apparently jumped from his runaway truck after his brakes failed on a steep, narrow gravel road. The driver had less than 1 year of experience operating a semi-truck. Earlier in the day, the driver entered the mill yard with his rear trailer brakes smoking. The trailer air-brake lines had been damaged by dragging on the ground, and he fixed one air line with electrical tape. On the last load of the day, just prior to the incident, the driver stopped on the downhill road to allow another truck to pass. At a subsequent series of S-curves, the driver apparently jumped from his truck when the brakes failed and was run over by the wheels before the truck plunged over a hillside. The victim was found dead at the scene. The truck and trailer, on later inspection, had seven of ten brakes out of adjustment.

Mechanic killed pouring gasoline on fire

On January 9, 2006, a 37-year-old field mechanic for a logging company was killed when he tried to stoke a warming fire by pouring gasoline on it. The mechanic and a coworker arrived at a logging site at 7am to perform maintenance on a log-loading machine. The weather was cold and rainy, and the coworker started a warming fire, using a combination of diesel fuel and chainsaw gasoline. About 8am, the coworker left to call for parts on a cell phone. He returned about 15 minutes later and found the mechanic lying 35 feet from the warming fire, engulfed in flames. Another fire, about 20 feet from the warming fire, was found to be caused by a burning 5-gallon plastic gasoline container. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene.

Logger killed by a 41-foot pole sliding down steep hill

On March 21, 2006, a 21-year-old logger, working as a choker setter in a yarding operation, was killed by a pole sliding down the hillside from above. The rigging crew had just hooked a turn of logs to a skyline cable, and moved to a location in the clear of the turn as it moved to the landing. While the turn was heading uphill, a narrow 41-foot-long pole with a sharp end came sliding downhill toward the crew. The pole narrowly missed the rigging slinger. The choker setter was struck and impaled by the pole, and was carried about 27 feet downhill. The victim died shortly following the incident.

Logging worker killed while riding on step of skidder

On October 20, 2005, an 18-year-old skidder operator at a logging site was killed when he fell off a moving skidder while riding as a passenger on an access step outside the cab. At the end of the workday, the operator and a coworker were responsible for fueling the chipper at the landing site, and were using a skidder to go to retrieve the fuel truck, located about 750 feet away up a dirt skid road. The operator rode on the step outside the cab – which is not intended for passengers – holding onto handrails on the door and rear of the cab for support. The skidder was running in second gear at half throttle on nearly level ground. The two skid operators were talking during the ride, until the coworker noticed his passenger did not respond. The coworker discovered the operator lying in the road behind him, about three-quarters of the way to the fuel truck. The victim had been crushed by

the right rear wheel of the skidder. The coworker alerted other workers onsite and basic first aid was attempted. The victim died at the scene shortly after the arrival of first responders from the local fire department.

Truck driver crushed by front-end loader in mill yard

On September 23, 2004, a 50-year-old log truck driver was killed in a mill yard when he was crushed against his load of logs by a front-end loader. The log truck was being unloaded at 6:35am, shortly after the mill yard opened. The loader operator assumed the driver was in the cab of his truck, because he did not see him, and it appeared the middle two wrappers on the load had been removed already. According to standard procedure, the loader moved forward to secure the load of logs to allow the driver to safely remove the last two wrappers. A second loader operator working in the yard at the time saw a hard hat on the ground near the truck, and radioed to the first operator to back away. The victim was found dead at the scene, having been crushed between the loader and the load of logs.

Logger killed by swinging tree in yarding operation

On November 1, 2004, a 47-year-old logger, working as a choker setter, was struck by a tree in a cable logging operation. The choker setter was working with a partner, setting chokers to a turn of logs under a high-lead cable system. The pair was working on opposite sides of the skyline. Once the turn was set, the choker setter signaled the yarder engineer to activate the cable and move the logs up the hill. A small-diameter, tree-length log within the turn hung up on an adjacent stump, and swung out when it snapped free. The log hit the choker setter in the midsection. He was admitted to the hospital with broken ribs and serious internal injuries and died 7 days later.

Ranch hand killed by bulldozer while logging

On September 30, 2004, a 52-year-old ranch hand, working as a bulldozer operator in a logging operation, was killed when the D4E Caterpillar tractor he was operating slid backward over the top of him. The ranch hand was an experienced logger. With the engine left running, gear in reverse/neutral, parking brake set, and front blade raised about 1 foot off the ground, the ranch hand had exited the cab and was busy setting chokers to logs behind the bulldozer to haul them to a landing. The bulldozer evidently did not slip into gear, but the front blade was elevated, and the bulldozer was on a slight incline and the tracks rested on branches and other woody debris, which may have contributed to instability. The victim was pinned under the bulldozer, and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Operator killed when bulldozer slides off logging road

On September 6, 2003, a 75-year-old logger, working as a bulldozer operator, was killed when the D6H Caterpillar crawler tractor he was operating tumbled off a steep skid road into a ravine. The operator was climbing a 20-25 degree slope while reopening an old skid road. The bulldozer slid off the road against a tree while on a hard rock face covered by a 4-inch surface of scabble rock. The operator apparently regained control, and may have been trying to get the bulldozer back up on the road when it slipped off the 60-70 degree sidehill and tumbled about 150 feet to a logging road, where the operator was ejected. The bulldozer bounced another 450 feet into a ravine. The event was not witnessed. Fatal injuries probably occurred when the victim was thrown around in the cab, before being ejected.

Logger killed by falling sheave when yarder tower collapses

On April 18, 2003, a 42-year-old logger, working as a chaser, was killed while standing on the landing site during a cable yarding operation. A Madill 071 yarder was in the process of completing a turn when the tower collapsed. The tower fell on the boom of a delimber that was also operating on the landing site. The force of the impact caused a sheave (cable pulley guide) to shear off from the side of the delimber's boom. The falling sheave struck the chaser on the head, and punched through his hard hat. Life Flight was summoned. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene shortly after emergency help arrived.

Logger killed as skyline cable whips free of slash pile

On April 28, 2003, a 37-year-old logger, working as a hooktender, was struck and killed by a skyline cable as it whipped free from a large pile of logging debris, known as a slash pile. The hooktender, the employer's representative responsible for supervising the logging crew, and a choker setter, had extended the skyline to a new tailhold, without running the lines in and pulling a new layout in a straight line to the new location as originally planned. The jump put a 90-degree angle in the cable, with the slash pile in its path as it was drawn taut. The hooktender gave a signal to raise the skyline before he and the choker setter were in the clear. They were standing in front of the tailhold stump, less than 15 feet away, and had just turned to move uphill to a safe spot, when the skyline cable broke through the slash pile and whipped outward and back. The heavy cable struck the hooktender in his chest, knocking him into the choker setter. The choker setter sustained a fractured arm. The hooktender was knocked unconscious. The call of a man down brought the whole crew of eight to the scene, plus the employer and landowner who were also onsite. The victim was put on a stretcher and carried to a nearby logging road. He regained consciousness briefly and complained of intense pain. He tried to stand, but immediately fell, no longer breathing. Resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful. Local ambulance personnel arrived and transported the victim to a landing site for a life-flight helicopter, where he was pronounced dead.