



INDUSTRY SAFETY ALERT

Fatal leg injury while working alone in isolation

(Note: This tragic incident did not occur in a forestry operation, but it did occur in a forested setting while working alone / in isolation. It can serve as a reminder of the importance of safety in general and specifically, hazard awareness / site assessment; PPE; working alone procedures (check in, location / travel details).

The following information is derived from a Coroner's Report of an incident that occurred in British Columbia in the Spring of 2019.

Incident: Contracted to a film production company, a worker was collecting ferns and saplings from a power transmission right-of-way. The setting was brushy and littered with small sapling stumps. Most of the brush was cut to a couple feet above grade, resulting in a landscape full of sticks protruding from the ground.

Other than the access road to the transmission lines, there were no set paths or trails through the brush. Therefore, the worker would have travelled on foot through brush at variable slopes to access harvestable saplings.

The incident was not witnessed but it was determined by WorkSafeBC that the worker was likely returning to his vehicle on the access road and either stepped into or fell forward onto a stick that was protruding from the ground. The force was such that the end of the stick broke through his pants and punctured his upper leg. The worker was able to remove himself from the stick, which remained rooted in the ground, and hiked approximately 36 meters up a steep slope to get to his vehicle. He then drove his vehicle a short distance, until he lost consciousness. The vehicle came to rest against an embankment.

The worker was located a day after setting out for work. Authorities were summoned after he was reported as overdue by a family member.

WorkSafeBC 's incident investigation report outlined several contributing factors in the incident including:

- the employer's failure to ensure safe work practices for working alone
- lack of hazard identification and risk assessment
- lack of appropriate personal protective equipment
- lack of supervision and training.

Ask yourself: How prepared is your operation? How prepared are you?



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