

Hang-ups: Take a Second Look

Hang-ups can either be present naturally or can be created when a faller drops a tree and the tree being felled “hangs up” and does not reach the ground. This scenario presents one of the most difficult and dangerous felling operations you will face when performing chain saw operations. The size of the trees involved may be relatively unimportant; consider the damage that can be done to the human body with a piece of wood the diameter of a baseball bat. When a hang-up occurs, a simple operation can quickly turn into a complex situation requiring a complete reassessment along with the skills and knowledge of our most experienced operators. With a hang-up, the faller has basically created a completely new felling situation and it should be assessed accordingly.

If you hang-up a tree while falling it, or come across a naturally created hang-up or leaner, you now have a very complex situation involving both falling and bucking issues and concerns. Follow these recommended steps:

1. Shut the saw off, set it down.
2. Do a complete assessment of the new situation. Does it need to come down? What safety concerns remain if the hung-up tree is left as is?
3. Do you feel comfortable handling this situation? Are you over confident? Don't let size lull you into complacency. *Hang-ups and small diameter trees are responsible for a large percentage of injuries.*

ASSESS THE RISK

4. Hang-ups can be difficult to assess. Ask yourself, “have I seen this or had experience with this before?”
Ask for assistance if you don’t feel comfortable.
5. Are there safer means, other than hand falling, available to deal with this new felling problem? Consider alternatives such as winch and cable, mechanical harvester, dozer, skidder or blasting.
6. Can a no work zone be identified and flagged to prevent unnecessary exposure and risk, while still allowing the work to be accomplished?



Removal of Hang-ups

Before beginning a hand falling operation to remove a hang-up be sure to evaluate these aspects.

1. Can you determine all of the factors present? Adequate escape routes, binds, tension, compression, multiple stems, amount of overhead debris, wind, rot, and all possible reactions when cut.
2. A hung-up tree has no control or holding wood; when you take a section out it can fall in any direction.
3. You are vertically bucking and everything above your head is a potential overhead hazard.

**BE SURE THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO REMOVE THE HUNG-UP TREE AND
THAT THE RISK IN REMOVING IT IS NOT TOO GREAT.**

The Hazard Tree and Tree Felling Task Group website is located at:

<http://www.nwccg.gov/teams/shwt/httf/index.html>.

A PowerPoint presentation on Hung-Up Tree Awareness can also be found on this website at:

http://www.nwccg.gov/teams/shwt/httf/training_education.html.

ASSESS THE RISK