

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest Chainsaw Program

Bucking and Limbing Boot Strike RLS

June 9th, 2020

Background

During a chainsaw recertification field day, a sawyer was bucking and limbing a felled tree on a slope. The sawyer was limbing the downhill or offside of the tree from the uphill or onside of the tree. The sawyer placed his left foot up on the bole of the tree while cutting the offside branch. This sequence created an unusual footing position, which brought the sawyer's left foot up to their waist height, under the chainsaw power head. During the cutting sequence, the chainsaw came into contact with the sawyer's boot while running under power in mid-cut. The sawyer immediately stopped the chainsaw, ceasing operations, and reported the incident to his squad leader.

PPE and Incident Response Plan

The sawyer was wearing all the appropriate PPE for chainsaw operations, including a pair of Meindl brand mountaineering style boots. The mountaineering style boot that has become increasingly popular among the fire community as opposed to the traditional logger style boot. The chain cut into the index toe area of the sawyer's left boot, cutting through the rubber/leather toe, leaving the fabric liner intact (see photos). No bodily injury was reported as result of the boot strike. The sawyer's module had a medical response plan in place. It was reviewed prior to starting the project and was adequately prepared to respond to a serious incident.

What was Done Well

- The sawyer kept their eyes on their bar placement and saw the boot nick as it happened, thereby allowing an immediate pull back of the bar before it caused any further harm or medical incident.
- Action was taken immediately in ceasing operations and appropriate reporting through the chain of command. The sawyer also chose to participate in a self-initiated cool down and reflective period to calm nerves and learn from the mistake.
- Proper PPE was worn and performed its function well in protecting the sawyer's foot from harm.



Lessons

- Proper footing is vital to safe chainsaw operations.
- The sawyer had their left foot up on the bole while cutting downward through the offside with arms outside of a comfortable position. This caused the bar to follow a path directly to the sawyer's foot.
- Even though the sawyer was watching the chainsaw bar placement, the poor foot positioning with one foot up high and in the cutting path, caused overreach and lack of control.

Post Incident Reflection

"I talked with the sawyer today and discussed the mishap. His reflection was super positive as to why this event happened and replied that it really came down to being in a hurry and a lapse in focus. The cutting group had an AAR later that day and discussed the mishap and assured needing good body mechanics, attention to the bar tip, power head positioning, and slowing down with focus on your procedural process." –Supervisor

**This RLS was created by:
Forest Chainsaw Coordinator,
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