



## FALLING SNAGS

*Felling Safety Category*

Falling snags (dead, standing trees without leaves or needles in the crowns) present a significant hazard to wildland firefighters. Snags typically have much lower fuel moistures than live, green trees; and they burn more readily. In the process, they often throw spot fires far in advance of the main fire and often burn through more quickly than green trees, falling with little or no warning.

- The risk of injuries from falling snags increases during the night operational period when visibility is greatly reduced.
- While the cooler, nighttime period is generally a more effective time to gain control of wildfires, the increased risk from unseen falling snags may limit the widespread use of crews at night in areas of dead and dying timber.
- Environmental conditions that increase risk from falling snags:
  - Strong winds
  - Night operations
  - Steep slopes
  - Diseased or bug-killed areas
- Things to consider when assessing the potential hazards of both snags and green trees:
  - Trees have been burning for an extended period.
  - High-risk tree species (those that are known for rot and shallow root systems) are in the area.
  - Numerous downed trees
  - Dead or broken tips and limbs overhead
  - Accumulation of downed limbs
  - Absence of needles, bark or limbs
  - Leaning or hung-up trees
- Mitigation measures to take:
  - Identify and flag all high-risk snags and green trees.
  - Keep personnel out of the high-risk areas until the hazard has been removed.
  - Establish lookouts.

### References:

[Hazard Tree Safety Web Page](#)

**Have an idea? Have feedback? Share it.**

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