

Safety Bulletin



Back injury sustained while felling a tree



During recent de-vegetation works, a member of a working group felled a tree that hit a work colleague on the back, knocking him to the ground and causing injury. The emergency services were called, and following assessment by paramedics an Air Ambulance was deployed to transfer the injured party to hospital. He was subsequently diagnosed with bruising, swelling and injury to the facet joints in the vertebrae.

The immediate cause of the accident was an operative felling the tree with members of the working group still in the immediate area. No exclusion zone had been created. The operative who felled the tree was least experienced members of the working group, and had not checked the felling area, did not give any warnings and had a lapse in concentration.

Amongst the key learning points are:

1. Ensure all operatives are trained and competent to undertake the task.
2. Ensure exclusion zones are created and maintained at all times.
3. Ensure there is a system in place for clearing the work area before felling.
4. Ensure that the safe system of work is suitable for the task is fully documented and briefed to operatives, and a pre-works site specific risk assessment is completed.

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