

Investigation Report
Worker Fatally Injured from Fall
March 07, 2014

The contents of this report

This document reports the Occupational Health and Safety investigation of a fatal worksite accident in March 2014. It begins with a short summary of what happened. The rest of the report covers this same information in greater detail.

Incident summary

An arborist was conducting tree removal duties alone. The arborist appears to have been removing the top of a partially cut tree when the tree shifted and fell. The worker fell from a height of approximately 9 metres (m) causing fatal chest trauma.

Background information

The arborist was the sole proprietor/owner-operator of his company. He was a fully insured small company which conducted tree and tree stump removal as well as tree/bush trimming services in the Edmonton area and had greater than twenty years of experience in the tree care industry.

The arborist was hired by a private dwelling owner of the lake front property on Lot #306 at 60417 RR 124 on Garner Lake, Alberta.

Equipment and materials

The arborist was utilizing tree falling tools including two chainsaws: A Stihl MS 200T and a Stihl MS 361C. The MS 361C is a heavier chainsaw; 5.4 kilogram (kg) and can accommodate a 40.6 centimetre (cm) – 63.5cm cutting bar. The MS 200T is a lighter chainsaw (3.5kg) and can accommodate a maximum of 40.6cm cutting bar. The MS 200T was likely used as a climbing saw due to its lighter weight and cutting capacity.

The arborist was in the process of cutting a Poplar tree (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The tree had a diameter of approximately 30.5 cm and was in excess of 10.4m in height.

Sequence of events

On the morning of Friday March 7, 2014, the arborist began conducting tree falling duties on the lake front property.

Over the course of the day, the worker had removed and serviced several trees causing a significant amount of tree debris. Trees were observed fallen (whole and sectioned), stacked and in various stages of clean-up on the property.

Sometime between 1:00 p.m. (as identified by a phone call following lunch) and 4:00 p.m. (as identified by a neighbour who was able to identify that no tree falling noise was present), the arborist had attempted to cut a tree. The tree was partially cut at approximately 1.2m from the ground level (Figure 1). The chainsaw likely became stuck causing the arborist to climb the tree and cut off the top in an apparent attempt to reduce the overall weight of the tree. The tree top was cut off at a height of approximately 10.3m from the ground level.

The tree may have shifted and let go at the original cut site and started to fall.

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The worker was utilizing a work positioning waist harness, which was observed to be undone (not cut) indicating that the worker may have had the time to remove himself from the harness prior to the fall in an attempt to jump free of the falling tree (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Unbuckled work positioning harness.

The worker landed away from the fallen tree, however suffered fatal chest injuries in the fall.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) were advised of a missing person and conducted a search of the Garner Lake area. At approximately 11:50 p.m, the RCMP located the deceased arborist.

Completion

On December 10, 2014 Alberta Justice reviewed the case and determined the case did not support any charges under the occupational health and safety legislation.

The file was closed on April 27, 2015.

Final Report

Signatures

Original Report Signed

May 6, 2015

Lead Investigator

Date

Original Report Signed

May 6, 2015

Manager

Date

Original Report Signed

May 7, 2015

Director

Date