

HAZARD ALERT

POOR VISIBILITY IN FORESTRY OPERATIONS POSES GREAT RISKS

A chainsaw operator sustained severe, life-threatening injuries when he was run over by a skidder. The WorkSafeNB investigation revealed that members of this conventional logging operation were working in a regenerated growth area, which had extremely dense underbrush, making it difficult to see and to be seen.

Advancements in select-cut harvesting practices, such as residual volume removal and multiple-pass harvesting, have created more of these kinds of working conditions in New Brunswick logging operations.

These types of cutting prescriptions lead to greater risks for workers. Thick underbrush hinders visibility and also muffles sound, creating a very dangerous working environment. Before work begins, cutting areas need to be carefully evaluated to determine if harvesting is feasible.

Recommended Preventive Action

- The employer must perform a risk evaluation of densely regenerated blocks of land before harvesting begins. If it is determined that manual cutting cannot be performed safely, then the block should either be harvested mechanically or left alone.
- If it is determined that the block will be harvested manually, then the work must be pre-planned and special precautions must be taken. These may include:
 - Wearing high-visibility clothing and hard hats (hunter orange or yellow, and grey reflective stripes, depending on the season). Due to reduced visibility, this precaution is essential in regenerated woodlots.

- Using a reliable and tested communication method between the cutter and the skidder operator.
- Arranging for proper spacing of multiple operations, with enough distance between them to ensure safety.
- The skidder operator is ultimately responsible for his machine. He must, therefore, never move from the pre-established trails unless he has visual contact with the feller. He must also be advised of any other visitors or employees who enter the woodlot.

