

# Rapid Lesson Sharing

**Event Type:** Tree Strike

**Date:** July 13, 2025

**Location:** Toonerville Fire  
Washington State

## The Story and Lessons from this Tree Strike Incident

On Incident #95 (the Toonerville Fire), two Department of Natural Resource (DNR) Crews were gridding approximately 50 feet off a road in a timber stand. One crew member had just finished attaching a hose to a wye fitting and had just begun putting their fire pack back on when an unexpected event occurred.

A green Douglas-fir, approximately 12 inches DBH (bole diameter at 4.5 feet from the ground), fell on its own—without warning.

There were no visible signs of burn-out or instability on this tree. The firefighter heard the tree beginning to fall, shouted a warning, and tried to move clear. The falling tree knocked the fire pack off the firefighter but resulted in no injuries or equipment damage.

No felling operations were taking place in the area and the tree had shown no obvious indicators of failure.



## Lessons

### *What We Wish We'd Known*

- ❖ Even green, healthy-looking trees can fail unexpectedly due to hidden root damage, underground burn-out, or residual wind effects.
- ❖ Working in timber stands always carries risk, even when trees appear uncompromised.

### *What We Would Share with Others*

- ❖ Maintain constant situational awareness when working in or near standing timber.
- ❖ Reassess hazards regularly—especially after wind events, heavy fire activity, or when root systems may be affected.
- ❖ When operating in timber, always identify and maintain clear escape routes and safe zones.

### *Successes and Challenges*

- ❖ Quick hazard recognition, immediate vocal warning, and an attempt to get clear contributed to a positive outcome in this tree strike incident with no injuries.
- ❖ The main challenge is that some tree failures offer no visible warning, highlighting the limits of hazard

prediction in these conditions.

### ***Actions Moving Forward***

- ❖ Reinforce daily hazard assessments for standing timber, looking for subtle signs like root plate lift, lean, or surrounding soil disturbance.
- ❖ Emphasize the importance of clear escape routes and safe work positioning—even for short-duration tasks.
- ❖ Continue to train crews to communicate immediate hazards clearly and loudly.

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