

Lessons Learned

Tree... Coming Down! Downnnn the Hill! ...

The assignment for the day had an IHC and T2IA crew constructing indirect line in Division B. This is the second day of this project and the crews are returning to the section of line they left off the day before. Access to the line is up an old fairly steep dirt road, which switch-backed up the ridge. The IHC parks its crew carriers approximately ½ mile below the line location, while the T2IA crew which has 6 passenger pick-up trucks, drives up to and parks at the point the planned line leaves the road.

The Crew Superintendent and Captains brief the crew on their assignment and then go to scout the planned line location. The crew, led by the squad leaders hike up the road, to tie in with the T2IA crew and resume line construction operations.

The Sawyer mentioned as he hiked up the road past the T2IA crew vehicles, he had thought to himself the vehicles should not be there because of the operations taking place just upslope. However, he figured "the over-head knew what they were doing, and they surely thought the vehicles were in a safe location."

"Don't be complacent, speak up when you see something that may compromise safety"

-IHC Sawyer

Just past the T2IA crew vehicles, the crew left the road and hiked approximately 600-700 feet up a steep (100%+ slope) section of proposed line. Two saw teams went to work scouting for and removing any trees which may threaten the proposed line location or pose problems during holding operations.

After about 2 hours of work, the lead saw team made up of a B and a C sawyer, had progressed about 300 feet down slope. The next tree they located was a 30" DBH dead sugar pine which had broken off 60-70 feet up, and was about 50' interior of the proposed line location.



The team sized up the "stove pipe" and determined due to its location proximate to other trees, the only option available was to fell the tree straight down the slope. Feeling it was a "straight forward" tree, the C sawyer allowed the B sawyer to fell the tree.

After clearing an escape route to a safe area, the undercut was placed in the tree. Prior to the back-cut being initiated, a warning shout was given, after which the sawyer progressed with the final cut. As the tree fell and impacted the ground, the bole shed its bark and limbs and "rocketed" down the slope. Surprised to see the bole respond in this manner, the saw team shouted additional warnings down the slope.

Picking up speed on its downward descent, the tree came off the cut bank, impacting the roof of a pickup truck, and continuing for approximately 200 feet downslope. At the same time the tree was moving downhill, a member of the T2IA crew was retrieving a belt weather kit from

one of the vehicles parked on the road.

Hearing warning shouts and noise from above, the crewmember looked up and saw the log moving

downhill towards the vehicles. He reacted quickly and moved away seconds before the log impacted the vehicle. Even

though the vehicle sustained major damage, luckily no firefighters received injuries.

Lessons Learned:

- ***Sawyers need to maintain cutting area control***
- ***When felling on steep ground, use a side hill or quartering felling direction***
- ***Use road guards to maintain cutting area control***
- ***Assure vehicles are parked in an area well clear of felling operations***

