Crew Decided To Work Under Shadow Of Tree

A supervisor in a logging operation was killed by a falling tree.

The crew of three had been working under a tight deadline as they cut dead trees to be removed by helicopter. The supervisor and the faller on the crew were impatient with government safety regulations which required cutting the green trees in the path of the dead trees or “snags” they were salvaging. The third member of the crew had been on the job just two weeks and had received no formal training. He was responsible for attaching the slings to the dead trees to be lifted by the helicopter.

The dangerous situation was created when they were trying to salvage a large cedar snag and had to cut the green trees in its path. One of these trees was mis-cut and fell sideways. It hung up in the branches of the cedar snag.

Next the crew tried to cut both trees at once. The cedar snag came down but the smaller green tree fell only part-way and got hung up on three other trees. The crew then continued work in the shadow of this hung-up tree. All three were aware of the hazard and discussed it but continued work.

The supervisor was guiding the helicopter into place to pick up the felled cedar snag when the hung up green tree suddenly slid from its position, fell down and struck him on the head.

The hazards in this logging worksite are more dramatic than many of us face in our jobs. However, there is something to be learned no matter where you work. The crew failed to remove a hazard before continuing work. They were improperly supervised and poorly trained in safety procedures. Don’t work in a situation which you know to be hazardous. If it looks unsafe, it probably is. Make sure you receive the training you require. Follow safety regulations. They are there to protect you, not to slow you down.