Faller Struck by Slab

A tree faller was killed when struck by a decayed slab jarred loose by a fallen tree.

On a mountainside with 50 percent slope, he cut a hemlock snag (dead standing tree) that was 90 feet (27 meters) tall and 40 inches (101 centimeters) in diameter at the butt. The victim didn’t remove obstacles such as brush, limbs, tools and windfalls to make an escape path near the snag before cutting it.

About 24 feet (seven meters) uphill, a decayed fallen hemlock tree lay horizontally. The log was on top of two smaller parallel cedar logs. When the victim cut the snag it fell across one of the cedars, which jarred the hemlock. A slab from the decayed log broke loose and slid down the cedars, striking the victim on the side of the head and breaking his skull.

Are there overhead hazards on your worksite? Look around before you work and consider what may go wrong. Are there objects that could roll or slide as a result of any work activity? If so, they must be moved to a stable position or secured in place before you begin. You need to prepare an adequate escape path before you start.

Evaluate your work area so potential hazards can be avoided.