Loader Boom Strikes Driver

The boom of a log loader dropped suddenly and killed a logging truck driver as he was helping load a pulp truck.

He had climbed up an access ladder to the loader cab to hand a power saw to the operator. The operator was using the saw to trim some logs which were preventing the loader from swiveling. The victim stood under the boom, waiting for the operator to finish with the saw so he could retrieve it.

The operator accidentally pushed the control of the boom. The boom dropped, hitting the victim in the back and crushing him against the loader.

What measures could have prevented a fatality such as this?

- Nobody should be allowed to stand under a suspended load.
- While trucks are being loaded and unloaded, drivers should stand safely out of the way or stay in the cab. A safe distance exceeds the radius of the boom plus the length of the load it is picking up.
- The operator should not leave the controls until the boom is in a resting position. The machine must be at zero energy state for any cleaning, maintenance or adjustments such as this log-trimming job.

This kind of fatality is all too common. The Centers for Disease Control report 400 people are killed each year from being struck with falling objects at work. Most of the deaths, 71 per cent, are caused by trees, limbs and logs falling and hitting workers. Two-thirds of the fatal injuries occur in the construction, forestry, fishing and manufacturing sectors.