Log Amputates Bridge Builder’s Leg



A railroad bridge building crew was dispatched to a job they had never done before – to try to break up a log jam against a bridge in a river. The crew tried first to break up the jam with pike poles, but was unsuccessful.

One of the workers then asked to have a chainsaw handed down to him. He started cutting a large log. The force of the fast-moving water suddenly snapped the log where he had started the cut. The jagged broken end spun around and struck the victim’s leg, almost amputating it.

He died shortly after, before the rescue helicopter arrived. Although the foreman had urged his crew to work safely when they approached the log jam, no specific instructions, training or procedures were in place about how to do this unfamiliar job. Instead, it was every man for himself as they went to work on the log jam.

Prior instruction, training and planning will go a long way toward preventing on-the-job tragedies in all industries.