Lone Fire Lookout Hit By Falling Tree

A teacher working alone on top of a mountain during the summer as a forest fire spotter, was killed when he was hit by a falling tree he had cut down.

He was found when the relief spotter arrived in the morning for the change of shift. He had been dead since the previous afternoon.

He had felled two trees with a chainsaw. The second one was a 14-inch diameter fir. It had been cut clear through with a single cut, rather than partway through with the usual front cut and back cut. It appeared that as the tree had begun to fall, he had tried to push the tree off the stump in the direction he wanted it to go, when the butt of the tree slipped off the stump and fell straight to the ground.

A tree limb struck the victim in the head. He was not wearing a hard hat. As the butt end of the tree struck the ground, it kicked up, striking him. He died of shock caused by massive internal bleeding, and had suffered fractures to the ribs, sternum and pelvis.

The operation of dangerous equipment such as chainsaws requires special training and protective equipment. Never attempt a task such as cutting down a tree unless you know exactly how to do it safely. Regular check-in procedures are an important safeguard for men working alone or in isolated locations.