

# HAZARD ALERT!

## Beware the chicot danger zone

### WHAT HAPPENED?

On December 13, 2011, an experienced 68-year-old skidder operator finished clearing a trail, and as he exited the skidder, a birch chicot fell and fatally struck him. Exactly one year and one week later, on December 20, 2012, a skidder operator was pulling logs from a woodlot and the load hit a standing tree. The tree immediately fell and a 21-year-old worker was unable to escape its path. Since 2009, there have been 76 'struck by' injuries in the Ontario logging industry.

### WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

The leading cause of death and serious injury to people cutting timber is still the most obvious one – being hit by a falling tree. A chicot is a tree that has either become dry or rotten for various reasons, either from normal aging or special conditions such as species extinction, climate, insect infestation, disease, or human activity. Chicots present a tremendous hazard in the woods and need to be treated with respect.

These trees are dangerous because they are brittle and unpredictable. A gust of wind, vibration from equipment, a heavy snowfall or removing adjacent trees is often all that is needed for branches to fall suddenly from these trees, causing great harm.

### HOW COULD IT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED?

If you enter a work area or work within the danger zone of a chicot, hang-up, or freestanding tree, you are exposing yourself to the danger of an uncontrolled falling tree and contravening legislative requirements to remove chicot hazards.

During harvesting, chicots must be safely lowered to the ground prior to felling in the vicinity. If a chicot is selected to remain standing for the purpose of a wildlife tree, then no trees can be harvested within its vicinity, i.e. a radius equal to at least the height of the surrounding stand.

Chainsaw and skidder operators in a logging operation must be certified in the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities mandatory Cutter Skidder Modular Training Standards course. They must also receive workplace specific training by their employer in all aspects of the work they perform, including policies and procedures for safe felling of problem trees and other cutting hazards that might arise when working alone.

