

HAZARD ALERT

Worker fatally injured by fall of tree

The leading cause of death and serious injury to people cutting timber remains the most obvious one, being struck by a falling tree.

What happened?

A worker was fatally struck by a falling tree branch while working at a private residence in western Montreal. The worker was cutting trees in a backyard when the branch fell, fatally injuring him.

Why did it happen?

While it is not confirmed this was a chicot, it is important to understand the risks they pose. A chicot is a tree that has become dry or rotten from aging, insects, disease, climate, or human activity. Brittle and unpredictable, chicots are a serious hazard in the woods. A gust of wind, equipment vibration, heavy snow, or removal of nearby trees may cause branches or the entire tree to suddenly fall, which can result in fatal consequences.

Working within the danger zone of a chicot, hang-up, or freestanding tree exposes workers to the risk of an uncontrolled falling tree and is a violation of legal safety requirements.

How to reduce the risk

- Chicots must be safely lowered to the ground before felling trees in the vicinity.
- If a chicot is intentionally left standing as a wildlife tree, no harvesting can occur within a distance equal to at least the height of the surrounding stand.



A chicot is a tree that has either become dry or rotten either from normal aging or special conditions.

- Chainsaw and skidder operators in logging operations must be certified under the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development's mandatory Cutter-Skidder Modular Training Standards.
- Employers must provide workplace-specific training on all tasks performed, including safe felling of problem trees and procedures for dealing with hazards when working alone.

For more information on identifying and controlling risks from falling branches and chicots, **contact your local health and safety specialist.**

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Safety Checklist for Chicot Removal

Worksite risk assessment		
Recognize	Date	Initials
Confirm work area		
Identify hazards in work area		
Identify and mark chicots		
Assess		
Determine safest method for removing chicots:		
i. Skidder or other equipment		
ii. Chainsaw (chicots may not be solid, cut while observing hazards)		
Control		
Remove chicots as per discussion and protocol. Factors to consider:		
i. Approach chicot with caution		
ii. Stay out of the danger zone		
iii. Observe wind conditions		
iv. Safest direction to fall (direction of lean)		
When using a chainsaw to remove chicots:		
i. Cut at waist level to keep an eye on the potential of falling hazards		
ii. Notch the chicot to 50 percent of the diameter of the tree		
iii. Do not change the direction of the fall with a wedge		
iv. Be prepared to retreat along your planned retreat path		
v. Continually observe the chicot and surrounding hazards		
Evaluate		
Ongoing site assessment (presence of problem trees)		
Worker safety training		
Valid Cutter-Skidder Certification		
Refresher training on dealing with problem trees including chicots		
Supervisor safety training		
Hazard recognition training		
Competent supervisor training		
Ongoing coaching and enforcement		
Frequent, ongoing site assessment (presence of problem trees)		