Safety Audits Fatality File



LACK OF TRAINING BY COMPANY LED TO LOGGING WORKER'S TRAGIC DEATH

Sawyer Tree Service's failures left workers unaware of operating and machine hazards

WOODLAWN, Ill. – The death of a 20-year-old worker killed when a tree fell on him during logging operations could have been prevented if his employer had removed damaged trees prior to conducting logging operations on a 40-acre site in Woodlawn, federal inspectors determined.

"This was a tragic, preventable death of a young man who had been on the job just two months," said Aaron Priddy, OSHA's area director in Fairview Heights. "As loggers use their tools and equipment, they deal with massive weights and the momentum of falling, rolling, and sliding trees and logs. Training workers to recognize hazards is vital to preventing injuries in this dangerous occupation."

The agency found the Robinson-based company, which recently started a logging division, was in the process of removing logs from two tracks of land in Woodlawn. At the time of the fatal incident, a second employee was operating a log skidder and pulling two logs down a path when the logs struck a damaged tree causing it to break off and fall. The falling tree hit the young man, who suffered fatal internal injuries.

In its investigation, OSHA determined Sawyer Tree Service should have removed the damaged tree prior to conducting logging operations. The company also failed to train employees in equipment operation and to recognize logging hazards. The agency also found the company allowed employees, other than the operator, to ride on mobile vehicles without using safety restraints and seat belts. Sawyer also failed to provide first-aid and CPR training to employees.

OSHA has proposed penalties of $19,600.

The company has 15 business days from receipt of its citations and penalties to comply, request an informal conference with OSHA's area director in Fairview Heights, or contest the findings before the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.