

PF Olsen Toolbox Safety Alert 74

Date: June 2024	Focus Group: Felling Operations and Managers
Topic: Stem Mobilisation	Issued by: Nic Steens

Background and Incidents: A crew was cutting down trees on a flat area above a slope with a public road below. During this process, a felled tree struck a standing tree at the slope's edge, causing its top to break off. The top slid down-slope through the standing trees, eventually reaching the road below. Although traffic control measures were scheduled for the upcoming tree cutting on the slope, they were deemed unnecessary for the work on the flat area.

Injury Details: No injuries occurred during this incident. However, the unexpected movement of the stem during felling and the subsequent breakage and mobilisation of the tree top posed a significant risk to road users on the public road below.

Risk Awareness: Tree felling operations can lead to unexpected stem movements and chain reactions. Due to their weight and shape, stems, logs, even root balls and rocks can rapidly mobilise and travel considerable distances. This incident underscores the importance of anticipating and mitigating such risks to safeguard road user safety.

Safe Behaviours: To minimise risk, those working and planning felling operations must:

- **Ask “What If”:** Consider more than what might happen immediately.
- **Communicate:** PCBUs with overlapping duties must consult, coordinate, and cooperate with others under the HSW Act 2015. Effective communication, often through meetings and walking sites together, helps identify less obvious hazards, leading to better risk control by sharing information, best practices, and experience.

For Site Manager:

Print and complete the following:

1. Discuss with employees/operators:
2. Place on-site notice board or in file:

Site Manager: _____ **Date:** / /
(initials)

