

PF Olsen Toolbox Safety Alert 86

Date: May 2025	Focus Group: Harvesting Operations
Topic: Slips & Trips with Tools in Hand	Issued by: Nic Steens

Background and Incidents: While walking across a hillside during logging operations, an experienced tree feller was carrying a chainsaw in his uphill (left) hand and a fuel container in his downhill (right) hand. In drizzly, wet conditions, he slipped downhill and landed back onto the saw.

Injury Details: The chainsaw's dogs (spikes) caused a 4–5 cm gash to his lower outside thigh. The worker received stitches and was given the following day off work.

Risk Awareness: No long-term harm is expected, but the incident highlights how terrain, weather, and equipment handling can combine to significantly increase injury risk. Slippery slopes and wet conditions reduce footing, and carrying gear in both hands limits a worker's ability to recover from a slip. Tools like chainsaws, spades, or slashers can cause serious harm if a fall occurs while carrying them. The risk is heightened when both hands are occupied, leaving no means to stabilise or arrest a fall. Even experienced workers are vulnerable when routine tasks coincide with challenging environmental conditions.

Safe Behaviours: to minimise the risks:

- Carry tools on the downhill side where they can be more safely dropped if needed.
- Avoid carrying things e.g., fuel and saw, together – keep one hand free for balance.
- Allow extra time in wet or steep conditions – don't rush across slopes.
- Reinforce load-handling (carrying) practices regularly, even for experienced people.

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)

