Sawmill Foreman's Legs Severed by Saw Blade

A sawmill foreman (victim) died of injuries sustained after his legs were severed by a saw blade. The incident occurred at the location of a log home manufacturing facility while the victim and three co-workers performed a non-routine timber saw maintenance operation.

The timber saw consisted of a four-foot diameter saw blade and a metal carriage used to hold and transport logs during the sawing operation. The carriage movement was controlled by a continuous cable system driven by a horizontal rotating drum located slightly forward of the saw blade.

Drum rotation moved the carriage forward or backward along the carriage track-way. On the day of the incident, the cable had shifted laterally off of the drum during its use, which required maintenance to re-install the cable. The procedure for cable re-installation required manual rotation of the saw blade while the drum transmission mechanism was activated. This allowed the drum to be rotated while the cable was guided back into it.

The victim and co-workers de-energized the saw and locked-out the main electrical power switch. The workers attempted to install the cable by turning the saw blade until the victim decided to reactivate the power to the saw. The lock was removed from the main power switch, the electric motor started, and the drum transmission engaged allowing the drum to rotate. The victim positioned himself in the center of the carriage track-way and proceeded to guide the cable onto the drum.

When the final portion of loose cable wrapped onto the drum, cable tension was re-established causing the drum to pull the carriage down the track-way towards the victim and saw blade. The victim attempted to move out of the carriage path but was contacted by the carriage which pushed the victim through the saw resulting in the amputation of his legs.

A FACE investigation concluded the following steps should be taken:
- Prevent the carriage cable from travelling off of the drum
- Develop and enforce performance of approved maintenance and lock-out/tag-out procedures for cable re-installation
- Design the saw blade and cable drum to operate independently
- Install emergency shut-off switches at locations where personnel may be expected to work or perform routine maintenance

Safety Glasses Prevent Serious Injury on the Woodyard

On a late winter afternoon, a log truck driver was unbinding his load of treelength pine pulpwood at a mill’s unbinding station.

When the driver strapped down his load at the logging job, there was a tree limb, approximately two inches in diameter, sticking out somewhat beyond the standards. He ratcheted the strap down tightly, such that the limb was under significant tension.

Then, when the driver arrived at the mill’s unbinding station, he placed himself in a position where the path of the release of the tension of this limb was directly in line with his face as he loosened the tension on the strap.

When the tension was released, the limb snapped quickly outward and hit the driver in the face, with the force of the blow mostly against his safety glasses.

The safety glasses protected his eyes. He did receive a cut and was bleeding somewhat on the bridge of his nose – a minor injury.

Recommendations:
- Before binding a load on the logging job, try to remove potential tension on side limbs and other pieces sticking out by trimming them off first
- When unloading a load at the woodyard, do not stand directly in the path of any wood under tension during the binder release
- Enforcing woodyard safety policies pays off

May Your Holiday Season be Happy and Safe!