

Safety Bulletin



Crushed finger sustained during felling operations



It has been recently reported that an arborist has received a serious injury to the little finger of his left hand. He was working at ground level, felling a Sycamore tree with a diameter less than 30cm. He was working on an embankment with an incline of less than 25 degrees and did not warrant any rope access working system.

The operative had already cleared an area of Hazel trees to ensure he had a safe work area and escape route. A directional cut was made into the tree, which was leaning in the direction of felling. Once the back cut into the rear of the tree the operative lost his footing and placed his left hand onto a hazel stump next to the butt of the tree. The Sycamore tree hit the embankment and skipped to the left of the felling hinge on impact, and landed on top of the little finger of his left hand.

Although there was no damage to his glove, there was blood and he was in severe pain. Removal of the glove revealed the crushing impact injury which had removed the skin from the end of his finger and torn away his finger nail. First aid was administered on site, and the operative was taken to the nearest hospital A & E department.

Learning points

1. Always use the correct felling control method for the specific site and tree.
2. Make sure you have good footing on the ground. Evaluate if or how the felling task could go wrong, and ensure all eventualities within your control are risk assessed.
3. Ensure you are suitably trained to undertake the felling task, and if in doubt seek advice.
4. Never rush a felling operation due to commercial or site pressures.

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