

# INDUSTRY ALERT

## CRITICAL INJURY

### *Worker falls from infeed trough, suffers broken hip and collarbone*

#### What happened?

A sawmill worker was operating outdoor debarking equipment when a log got crossed at the end of the log deck where the logs fall into the debarker's infeed trough. The debarker operator climbed into the trough with a peavey — a pole with a hook and a spiked end — to straighten the log. As the debarker operator pulled on the peavey to turn the log, the peavey slipped from the surface of the log and the operator fell backwards over the side of the trough onto a concrete pad about 1.8 metres (six feet) below. The impact of the fall broke his right hip and collarbone.

#### Why did it happen?

The debarker operator had one year of experience operating the equipment and he had been oriented in safe procedures relating to work practices and processes around the equipment. But the hazard of occasionally having to climb into the infeed trough and work there with no guardrail along the edge of the trough had not been identified and controlled when the safe procedures were developed. As a result, a loss of footing led to a fall and critical injuries.

#### How can it be prevented?

A complete risk assessment is required during the development of safe operating procedures in order to ensure that all hazards are identified and controlled before workers are put into harm's way.

Although Section 85 of the Regulations for Industrial Establishments requires a fall protection system for any work that's performed at a height of more than three metres (10 feet), this incident shows that serious injuries can occur as a result of a fall from considerably less than that height. For this reason, Section 13(b) of the Regulations requires that a guardrail be in place at an open side of virtually all raised surfaces on which a person may have to perform work.

A guardrail would not have prevented the debarker operator from losing his footing when the peavey he was pulling slipped from the log, but it would have kept him from falling over the side of the infeed trough. Although the relative sharpness of the hook at the end of the peavey was not a direct cause of the critical injuries, tools that are kept in good working order reduce the risk of mishandling errors that can lead to more serious hazards. Identification and control of all hazards, including the periodic inspection of relevant tools, are crucial to the development of effective safe operating procedures for any job or task.

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