

Seasonal Hazards!

By John Lemire

Overhead hazards are the leading cause for catastrophic injury and death in the forest industry. As Spring unfolds its beautiful colors, loggers are faced with the hazards that the Spring greening brings. Lost is the visibility you had when the trees were bare. As the trees start to bud, the leaves create a thick canopy and it is no longer a simple task to see overhead hazards.

As the forest rejuvenates itself, the new canopy hides overhead hazards. Please take the time to brief your crew on overhead hazards and the reduced visibility caused by leaf out.

- **Be visible; wear high visibility safety colors to make your presence known.**
- **Use approved personal protective equipment (PPE) for head protection.**
- **Wear good fitting work boots. Remember the ground can be slippery from rain or mud.**
- **Look and scan at least 50 feet ahead on your ground path of travel.**
- **Look and scan at least 100 feet ahead for all overhead hazards.**
- **Never put yourself under any object that can fall or move due to gravity or the loss of hydraulic pressure.**
- **Keep in contact with the ground personnel. Communicate to prevent surprises.**
- **Maintain at least two tree lengths from all felling operations.**
- **Timber-cutters shall use proper felling techniques which include proper face notches, with no by-pass, and adequate hinge-wood to control the tree's fall to the ground.**
- **Timber-cutters should be using the "5-part" felling plan. This plan reduces risk during the manual felling process.**

If you are fully mechanized, you still have the issue of overhead hazards. Entering or exiting your equipment in the woods or at the landing can still expose you to hidden dangers. As Spring brings new beginnings, take precautions. Do not become careless or injured by the hazards the new growth hides. Look Up! Scan ahead, be alert, and be safe.