

Sí Se: Salud y Seguridad en el Bosque
Health and Safety Education for Forest Workers

The Four Elements of Safety

Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls While Working in the Woods



Northwest Forest Worker Center

**This material has been made possible by a grant from the
Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division,
Department of Consumer and Business Services**

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About this training guide

Introduction to the promotora

This guide is your training tool for teaching forest workers and their families about the hazards that come with working on uneven terrain with roots, rocks, slash and other obstacles on the ground. The information is tailored for workers in Oregon, but most of it is relevant for forest workers throughout the U.S. To teach this session, hold the guide so that the illustrations or photos face toward the workers you are training. On the other side are the instructions for what to say and do during the session.

Instructions for the promotoras will be in red.

Answers to questions will be in shaded boxes. Wait for participants to give answers based on what they know, and then add any missing points or clarify any information needed.

Flip the page to the next page when you are done.

Learning objectives for this session

By the end of this session, participants will know what they can do to lower their risk of slipping, tripping or falling at work. They will know:

- The importance of boots with good traction
- How to safely climb up, down or over things
- To not engage in unsafe acts
- To continuously pay attention to footing and conditions on the ground, and
- The importance of being physically prepared

Materials needed for this session

You will need blank paper and pens for writing (in case participants want to write down notes).

Time for this session

The total time for this session is approximately 2 hours. These are the main activities, with estimates for how much time each part will take.

Welcome, Pre-test and Introduction	15 minutes
Pascual’s Story	10 minutes
The Four Elements of Safety	20 minutes
What the Law Says	15 minutes
What can we do to improve safety at work	30 minutes
Review	10 minutes
Wrap-up and Evaluation	15 minutes

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Welcome the participants, including family members, and introduce yourself. Explain that while the training will focus on what forest workers can do to stay safe at work, we also know that families are an important resource and source of support, to help them stay safe.

Say: Today we're going to talk about how to prevent slips, trips and falls while working in the woods. I'll be giving you a lot of information, but also asking you questions about what we are talking about. Let's start with introductions.

Have participants introduce themselves, or do some kind of activity or "ice breaker" that helps people relax and get to know each other.

Say: There are many hazards that can cause slips, trips and falls in the woods including uneven ground, rocks, roots and debris on the forest floor, slash you have to climb over, wet, slippery slopes, and other things like that. You can't change the physical environment or weather in the woods, but you can change your behavior.

You may rely on luck to keep you safe. You have performed an unsafe act hundreds of times and never fallen. But, it is risky to rely on luck alone.

In fact falling is one of the two most common ways of getting hurt in forestry services. (The other most common way is getting struck by a falling object.)

Today you will learn some simple steps you can take to reduce your risk of falling and getting injured when working in the woods.

Now explain that you know how dangerous working in the woods is because your husband (or other relative) is a forest worker. Then give an example of someone among your family or friends who has fallen and injured themselves at work.

Ask: How many of you have ever fallen while working?

Pick someone who raises their hand and ask them to share their experience. Ask them questions if you need to get the story out. But keep the conversation short. When they are done talking, thank them for sharing.

Say: Before we begin, I'd like to ask you a few questions about slipping, tripping and falling at work. This is not a test. It just helps us know how good a job we are doing.

Ask the "pre-test" questions for this unit, following the script.

The Four Elements of Safety

Preventing Slips, Trips & Falls

While Working in the Woods



Pacual's Story

Say: Now let's talk about falling in the forest. I will read this story about what happened to a worker named Pascual. Then we will talk about how to avoid falling.

Pascual ran to catch up with the rest of the crew. He had wanted to finish thinning around the wildlife thicket he was creating when the rest of the crew quit work for the day and started heading back to the crummy. The terrain was flat, but there were many downed trees making walking difficult. Pascual stepped up onto a log, and as he swung his other leg across to step down on the other side, the bark under his foot tore loose. He pitched forward and fell with his full weight on the next log in front of him, cracking his ribs. He was out of work for 3 weeks.

Ask: What did Pascual do that increased his risk of falling and being injured?

Keep asking questions to make sure the students give you the following answers:

- He was running
- He was in a hurry
- It was the end of the day; maybe he was tired
- He may not have been paying attention

Ask: What are some things in the work site that could have led to Pascual's fall?

Keep asking questions to get a list of hazards. Some possible answers include the following.

- There was slash on the ground
- The log he stepped on could have been wet and/or rotten
- Snow or rain could have made things slippery

Pascual's Story



Say: We talked about some things that can lead to falls. Now let's talk about what you can do to prevent slips, trips and falls while working in the woods. What we want you to remember today is **the four elements of safety**.

Ask: What are the four elements of safety? Ask for a volunteer to read the four elements on the flip chart.

Say: Let's talk about Preparation, the first element of safety.

The Four Elements of Safety

1. Preparation

2. Attention

3. Balance

4. Take Care of Yourself & Each Other

Ask: What do you do to prepare yourself for avoiding slipping, tripping and falling at a worksite?

Let the students say what they do and point to the pictures on the page if they mention them. If they don't mention them, point to the pictures and ask what the pictures tell them about preventing slips, trips and falls and other accidents.

Picture 1:

- Wear good work boots (caulks). This is one of the most important things you can do to prevent slips, trips and falls.

Picture 2:

- Assess the site before starting work.
 - Look for snags and widow makers (We'll come back to this.)
- Do a prework safety meeting – the law requires this
- Make sure everyone on the crew is aware of the hazards
- Eliminate hazards to the extent possible

Picture 3:

- Warm up and stretch before doing strenuous work
- Be aware of your body limitations, especially if you are at higher risk of injury

Preparation

The First Element of Safety

1:



2:



3:



Say: Now let's talk about Attention, the second element of safety.

Ask: What are the two things you need to pay attention to?

Let the students answer, and say the following if they don't.

1. Pay attention to what you are doing, and
2. Pay attention to your surroundings.

Ask: What do these pictures tell you about preventing slips, trips and falls by paying attention to what you are doing and paying attention to your surroundings?

Keep asking questions to make sure the students give you the following answers. Point to the pictures on the page as they mention them.

Picture 4: Maintain 3 points of secure contact

- A. when climbing over slash (Step sideways over obstacles such as downed trees and logs)
- B. when getting on and off the crummy or other machinery
- C. don't jump off of stumps, logs, the crummy or other high objects (this not only can lead to sprains, but also over time it put a lot of wear on your knees.) Step or climb down instead.
- D. Avoid climbing on logs loaded on trucks (brand logs before loading.
- E. Think about what you are going to do before you do it. Don't hurry

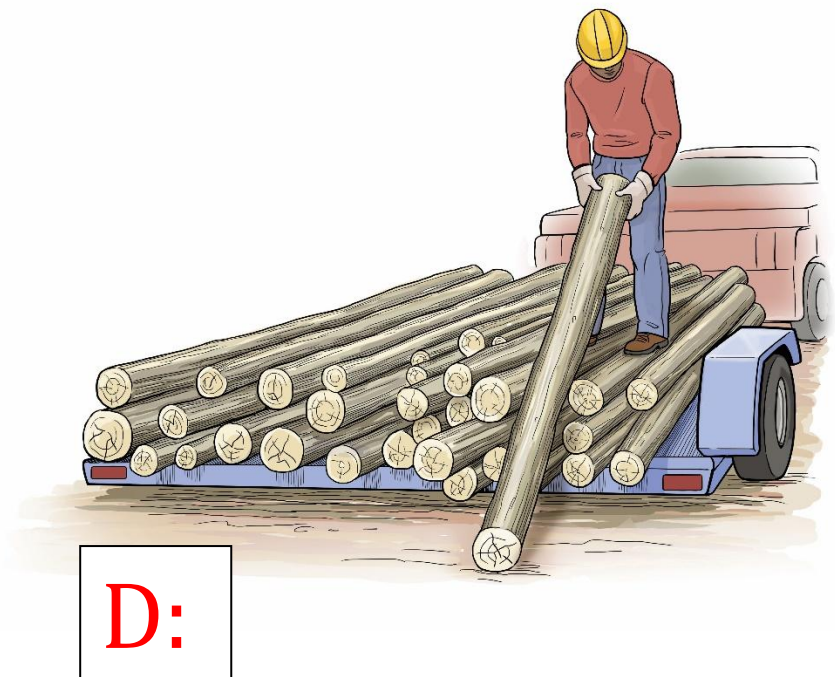
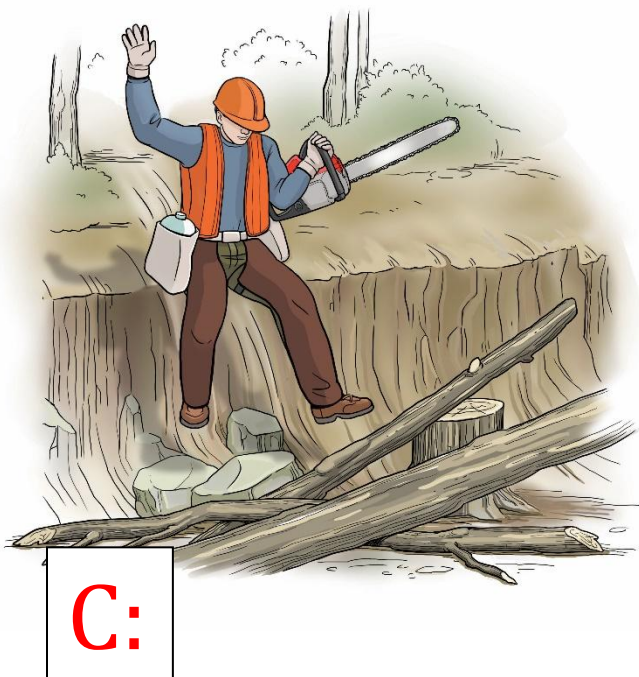
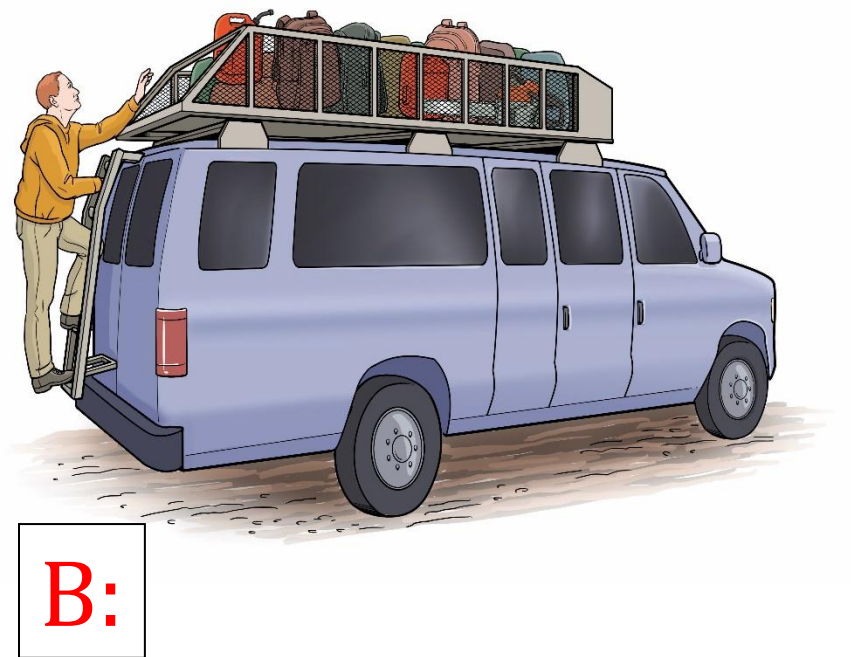
Picture 5:

- Check for dead trees (snags) and overhead dead limbs (widow makers) in the felling area that could break and fall if struck by the tree being felled.
- Loose limbs that fall onto the tree cutter are a common cause of serious injuries and fatalities.
- Check the trunk and branches for decay, rot, cavities, splits, and tension wood that would require special handling.
- ***“Look Up, Look Down, and Look All Around.”***
- Remove loose limbs before felling, if possible. If that's not possible, fell the tree from a position where the limbs could not strike you if dislodged.
- Make sure that everyone on the crew is aware of all hazards that exist and how to safely work to eliminate them.

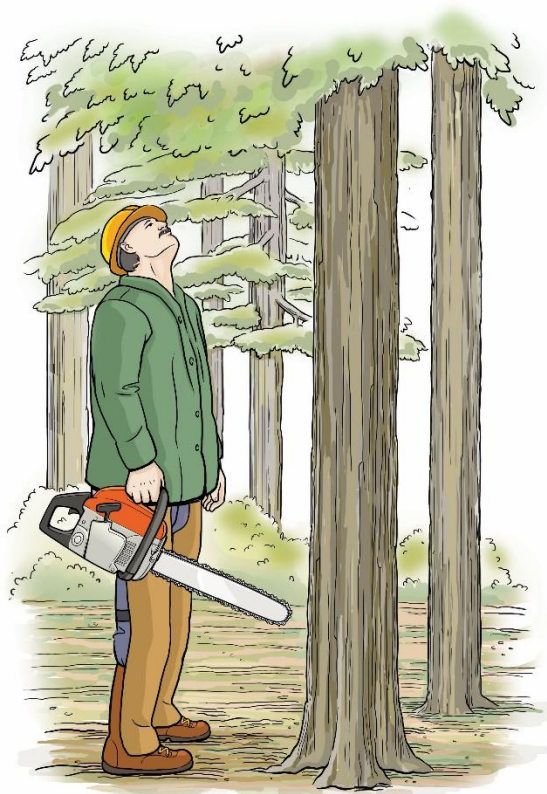
Attention

The Second Element of Safety

4:



5:



Say: The third element of safety is balance.

Ask: What do these pictures tell you about maintaining your balance while working in the woods?

Keep asking questions to make sure the students give you the following answers. Point to the pictures on the page as they mention them.

Picture 7:

- Don't work off balance. Avoid awkward positions. Reposition your body to maintain stability and control of the saw.

Picture 8:

- Turn sideways when walking on steep slopes. Turn 90 degrees from the fall line of the slope so your left or right hip is turned toward the hill. Take short steps and keep your uphill foot from crossing in front of your downhill foot. This position improves traction. In addition, in the event of a fall, the individual will land on his hip or leg instead of on his more injury prone back or neck.

Picture 9:

- Don't cross ravines on logs. Losing your balance and falling onto rocks below can cause serious injury. Walk down into the ravine and up the other side.

Picture 10:

- Don't hurry

Balance

The Third Element of Safety

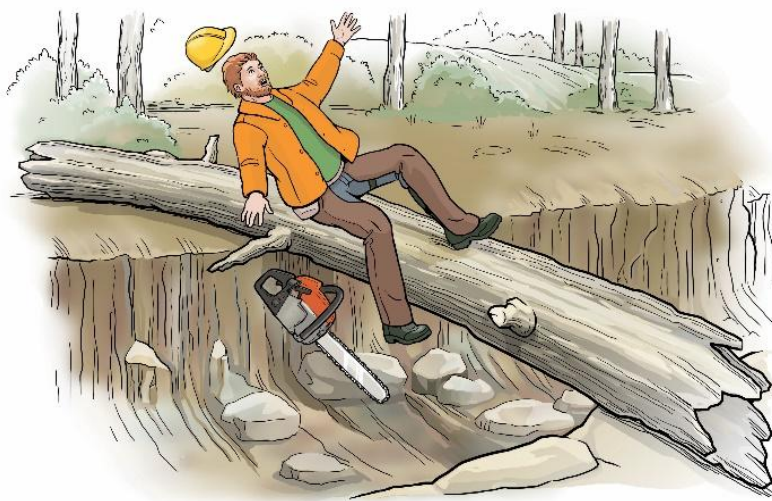
7:



8:



9:



10:



Say: Now look at this set of pictures and let's talk about what they tell you about the fourth element of safety: watching out for each other.

Point to the pictures on the page and ask the students to talk about what the picture says about watching out for each other. Make sure the following points are raised.

Picture 11:

- Take rest breaks – we make more mistakes when we're tired

Picture 12:

- Take care of each other
- Everyone on the crew should identify hazards when they are spotted. This kind of teamwork will help keep everyone free from injury.
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate!**
- Be aware of the location of other workers
- NEVER work alone.
- Don't compete with your coworkers

Picture 13:

- Work at least two tree lengths apart when felling trees. The law requires this.

Take Care of Yourself & Each Other

The Fourth Element of Safety

11:



12:



13:



Say: Now, you might think that there's nothing you can do about slip, trip and fall hazards in the workplace because that's just the way it is in the mountains and you feel you might get in trouble if you say anything. But the law requires employers to provide a safe workplace.

Did you know these other things the law requires employers to do to make sure the workplace is safe?

Review the requirements listed on page facing the workers (page 18).

- Before starting any work in the forest that will last more than one day, the employer must:
 - Conduct a safety survey of the work site.
 - Hold a pre-work safety meeting with employees to discuss:
 - The emergency medical evacuation plan, and
 - Site conditions and known hazards.
- If any hazards are found (like hazard trees or boulders that might come loose and roll down the hill on workers), the employer must have qualified employees take corrective action and eliminate those hazards.
- Employers are also required to have their employees report safety and health hazards.
- The law also requires employers to permit workers to exercise their rights under the law without retaliation or discrimination.

What the law says

Employers must:

- Conduct a safety survey of the work site.
- Hold a pre-work safety meeting with employees
- Have qualified employees eliminate any hazards found
- Have their employees report safety and health hazards
- **NOT** punish a worker for exercising his rights



Say: Now I would like you to break up into pairs so we can practice telling the boss about unsafe working conditions. Sit facing each other and talk about how you would report a safety hazard to the boss, or ask him to do something else (like provide you with new chaps, or give you rest breaks) to make work safer. You have 15 minutes to talk about this.

Explain that when they are done talking about it, you will ask them to pretend that you (the promotora) are the employer, and to pretend that they are reporting an unsafe condition to you. (This is called role playing.)

Encourage participants to think about what the workers can try to change, but recognize the possibility that some workers, especially undocumented workers, may not think it is realistic to approach the employer. If the workers have trouble thinking of what to do or say, give them hints like:

Get help from the NFWC; talk to other workers; take breaks anyway

At the end of the 15 minutes bring everyone back together and have them role play with you pretending that you are the boss.

When everyone has had a turn at the role play, ask:

While people were pretending to report safety problems to the boss, did you notice or think of some good ideas for addressing health and safety problems?

Let people respond. Ask questions to help draw out some of the following tips.

Tips for problem-solving at work

1. Make a plan. Decide what you are trying to achieve.
2. Find other help that is available (for example, NFWC).
3. What are the obstacles to getting what you think is needed?
 - What if workers are undocumented? How can they be protected?
 - Don't do anything alone. Get help from NFWC or other organizations.
 - When working together, have documented workers or US citizens be the spokesperson.
 - Write everything down that happens.
 - What can workers do to protect themselves in the mean time?
4. Talk to the boss or supervisor.
 - Who is the best person to talk to?
 - Do not go alone.
 - Explain how your solution will benefit the employer.
 - Write down what happened.
5. If the problem does not get solved, contact NFWC, OSHA, or other organizations for assistance.

What can we do to improve safety at work?



Say: We started this training discussing Pascual's story. To review what we've learned, let's remember his story and discuss what was wrong.

Pascual ran to catch up with the rest of the crew. He had wanted to finish thinning around the wildlife thicket he was creating when the rest of the crew quit work for the day and started heading back to the crummy. The terrain was flat, but there were many downed trees making walking difficult. Pascual stepped up onto a log, and as he swung his other leg across to step down on the other side, the bark under his foot tore loose. He pitched forward and fell with his full weight on the next log in front of him, cracking his ribs. He was out of work for 3 weeks.

Ask: What are the four elements of safety, and how might they have helped Pascual prevent this accident?

- The Four Elements of Safety
 - Preparation; Attention; Balance; Take Care of Yourself & Each Other
- How they might have helped Pascual
 - Preparation
 - Worn boots with better traction
 - Attention
 - Maintained 3 points of secure contact when going over the logs, and stepped sideways over the logs
 - Balance
 - Not have been in a hurry.
 - Take care of yourself & each other
 - Be aware of the location of your coworkers (the other crew members could have waited for Pascual)
 - Better communication – Pascual and the other crew members could have talked about him finishing up before quitting for the day.

Ask: What else can you do to prevent slips, trips and falls at work?

- Report dangerous conditions to your supervisor (Preparation)
- Think about what you are doing before you do it (Attention)
- Don't work off balance or in awkward positions (Balance)
- Take rest breaks (Take care of yourself & each other)

Ask: Is it legal for your employer to fire you for reporting safety hazards?

No.

Ask: What must your employer do before starting work that will last more than a day?

Hold a prework safety meeting with employees.

REVIEW



Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the worker advisory committee in Medford, OR, and to members of the Northwest Forest Worker Center for their feedback, input and support of this project.

The general instructions in this guide as well as the exercise on reporting unsafe conditions are adapted from the “Health and Safety on the Job: Your Rights and Responsibilities” developed by the Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters and the Labor Occupational Health Program (<http://www.nwforestworkers.org/publications/workersrights.pdf>).

Credits

Illustrations: Mary Ann Zapalac

Photos: Lomakatsi Restoration Project, except as follows.

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