Wood Chipper Fatality

7 September 2019

Incident overview
A group of workers were felling branches and vegetation at a school in Lindfield. A male worker was feeding the branches into a wood chipper when he was pulled into the machine, sustaining fatal injuries.

The investigation
- SafeWork NSW inspectors responded to the incident and attended the site.
- SafeWork NSW has commenced an investigation to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident.
Safety Information

Businesses are reminded of their duty to identify hazards and manage risks to health and safety in accordance with the provisions of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017.

Businesses must consider ‘reasonably practicable’ control measures to manage the risk of tree trimming and removal work.

Control measures that may prevent a similar incident include:

- Conducting pre-start checks, to ensure equipment and systems are working correctly.
- Making sure nothing is entangled in material before it’s fed into the wood chipper.
- Keeping unnecessary ropes away from the work area.
- Ensuring emergency stops and control bar are functioning properly.
- Operating the wood chipper according to manufacturer’s instructions.
- Ensuring teams consist of at least two competent workers, who have been given specific training on the individual machine being used
- Feeding branches off the centre line. Where reasonably practicable, the operator feeding the branches into the wood chipper should do so from the side.
- Using a ‘push-stick’ at least 1.5 metres long, to feed shorter material into the machine.
- Stopping the rollers before reaching into the chute.
- Making sure the wood chipper is never left unattended while operating.

Further information

- Code of practice for the amenity tree industry
- Tree work webinar
- Guide to managing risks of tree trimming and removal work
- Tree work self-assessment checklist
- Safety alert – working safely with trees