

Case Study - Profile of a Tree Worker Accident

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Todd works for a Company that has three crews. He is a second climber on a bucket crew. Over his five years in the industry he has learned an awful lot and sees a bright future ahead of himself. He and his wife just closed on their first house a month ago.

The day the accident occurred, he was working with a different crew leader. Todd never really cared for working with this person, as he always felt pressured by this guy to work faster and faster. It was a cool spring day, sunny and dry. They were sent out to remove some small trees along a driveway and crown clean several trees near the house.

Getting out of the yard that morning was a challenge. Todd had to get all of his gear off of the truck he is normally on and then, their chipper wouldn't start. Todd was familiar with this model of chipper, and the crew soon had it running again. After leaving the yard the crew leader made it very clear that they were going to have to keep up with him because of the lost time at the yard. Todd remembers saying to himself, "here we go!"

After they arrived at the property and reviewed the work, the crew leader made up the work plan. Todd tried to offer his ideas and the crew leader ignored him. According to the crew leader, Todd's role for the morning would be work with the other, younger fellow to help chip the wood and brush from the removals. While Todd didn't mind chipping, he knew that having two people behind the chipper wasn't the most efficient way to get this job done. But, he went along with the crew leader anyway.

For the most part, throughout the morning, showing he could keep up with the crew leader, Todd worked at his own, brisk pace. He moved quickly and paid little attention to the others on the crew. About two hours into the task of removing the trees, Todd picked up a red maple piece about four feet long and eight inches in diameter and tried to feed it into their twelve inch chipper. He didn't have a push stick to use in order to keep his hands out of the in-feed chute, so Todd dropped the piece of wood onto the tray and proceeded to push the piece of wood into the in-feed wheels with his hands on top of the piece of wood.

The top in-feed wheel caught the piece of maple and kicked the end of the piece that his hands were on into the top of the in-feed chute. His hands were shattered by the force of the blow. He immediately fell to his knees and blacked out from the pain. He was rushed to the hospital where he went through extensive surgery to reconstruct his hands. Todd missed six months of work and still does not have full use of his fingers because of nerve damage.