



## **Working in Areas with Overhead Hazards**

### **Background:**

Across the west, tree mortality is increasing, as large forests succumb to drought, wildfire, and insect infestations. Snags and hazard trees can pose life-threatening risks to staff and volunteers working in the field.

### **Considerations:**

By exercising good judgment and safety practices, including addressing overhead hazards as part of daily safety talks and practices, thoroughly evaluating worksites, the risk of injury to people and damage to tools and equipment can be reduced. Volunteers and staff should employ the following practices to mitigate risk:

1. Make hazard trees and overhead hazards a key part of every JHA and tailgate safety session and emphasize in all aspects of the work—during work, also during lunch, at breaks, etc., with special consideration for work sites in a burn area or that have die-off from bark beetle infestations.
2. While scouting an area for an upcoming project, carefully evaluate the site for overhead hazards. Pay special attention to areas where activities may increase exposure time.
3. If overhead hazards are identified that need to be addressed, report these hazards to the PCTA Regional Representative and/or local agency staff.
4. Even if the project doesn't include bucking, identify the best escape routes should an overhead hazard come down.
5. Always minimize the amount of time volunteers and staff are exposed to overhead hazards as brief as possible. Do not camp in burned areas. Check all campsites for overhead hazards such as widow makers, damaged crowns and branches, and separated limbs.

### **Key Message:**

No trail maintenance, construction or other work is worth injury or death! If a worksite poses serious hazards, do not work there.

### **For More Information:**

The Forest Service Hazard Tree Guidelines can be found here:

<https://www.pcta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Forest-Service-Hazard-Tree-Guidelines.pdf>