



INDUSTRY

# SAFETY ALERT

## Silviculture Operations Hazard: Extreme Weather

**Location:** British Columbia

**Date:** July 12, 2020

**Description of Event:** Unusually wet weather and unstable weather systems have prevailed throughout springtime in Western Canada, and further wet and stormy weather is expected in the weeks ahead. The heavy rainfall and high winds that accompany these weather systems can create risks for silviculture operations.

Unstable air masses can produce dangerous winds with little warning, and several tornados have already been reported in Alberta in 2020.

Saturated soils can destabilize root systems of trees, and even moderate winds can cause healthy trees to fall.

Cut-banks, riverbanks, and hillsides may become unstable due to saturation. Rivers and streams may rise rapidly, and bridges and roads may be washed out, stranding workers or cutting them off from help. Road conditions may deteriorate and become hazardous for drivers.

Workers may be stressed and fatigued from prolonged exposure to cold and wet conditions

**Suggested Actions:** Employers are encouraged to review their policies for working in difficult weather conditions. Ensure your crews are aware of all hazards and associated safe work procedures. Key points to review may include the following:

- Check weather forecasts regularly and update crews if unstable conditions are expected.
- Try to finish work around treeline areas during calm conditions, such as morning time when winds are generally lighter.
- Re-assess conditions around camps and other worksites after extreme weather in order to identify any new hazards due to wind damage or erosion.
- Assess bridges prior to crossing and do not travel on roads covered with moving water
- Ensure all workers understand when to stop working and seek shelter from storms.
- Ensure workers understand specific emergency procedures for high winds, lightning, hailstorms, and extreme weather events when they are working on the landscape.
- Discourage the use of headphones or music players which may reduce awareness of one's surroundings.
- Ensure your camp has a plan for mustering workers and ensuring their safety in the case of an extreme weather event.

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