

Investigation Process

What triggers a fatality or catastrophe investigation by the N.C. Department of Labor?

- A worker's death.
- Hospitalization of three or more employees.
- The department may also receive information of a fatality or catastrophe from media reports or referrals from other government agencies.

How is NCDOL notified?

- An employer must notify NCDOL within eight hours of a worker's fatality or the hospitalization of three or more workers.

What will the investigation focus on?

- The investigation will usually be limited to the events surrounding the accident unless observations at the site indicate a broader investigation is needed.

What will happen during the investigation?

- An NCDOL investigator will go to the accident site and collect physical evidence, including photographs.
- The investigator will interview employees, witnesses and management officials about the accident to determine its cause.
- Any violations of safety and health standards will be noted and citations will be issued.

How long will the investigation take?

- An investigation can take anywhere from a few weeks to six months, depending on the complexity of the accident.

When are investigation results disclosed?

- Citations and penalties, if issued, can be released to the public on the issuance date.
- Other contents of the file cannot be released until the case is closed or final order on citations is rendered.



This tree was not cut properly, exposing employees to hazardous working conditions. Trees should be felled according to the OSHA standards, so they fall where expected.

The Investigation

Investigators will seek to determine several factors, including whether:

- Personal protective equipment was worn, including hard hat, eye and hearing protection, safety shoes, saw chaps, and gloves.
- Employees remained at least 2 feet from the tree being cut.
- Damaged or lodged trees were cut down, removed or avoided.
- A safe distance from overhead power lines was observed. Any vehicle or machine with elevated parts must maintain a clearance of 10 feet.
- Equipment had proper safety devices.
- Loggers were trained on proper logging techniques.
- Employees were trained in first aid and CPR.

Standards: 29 CFR 1910.266, Logging Operations; 29 CFR 1910.269, Electric Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution

Industry Type: General Industry

Accident Type: Struck by tree or limb during logging operations

Statistical Data: Logging or tree trimming fatalities accounted for eight of the 80 worker deaths in 2005.



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What programs does the Department of Labor have in place to prevent logging accidents?

Logging and arborist special emphasis program: Increased training and consultation for loggers.

Free training: Training, including pro-logger safety class.

Publications: Logger Safety Checklist Booklet.