

Dozer Operator/Swamper: Removing Lodged Material

Rapid Lessons Shared



In the event that an operator encounters material (branch, limb, small tree) that has become lodged between the implement(s) and the body of the dozer, a unique combination of hazards is created. To safely mitigate these hazards, a confluence of operator skillsets, communication, and thorough size-up must take place. The Texas A&M Forest Service's Chisolm Trail Task Force, a group with experience in both dozer and chainsaw operations, recently conducted an open discussion among their resources, and came up with several considerations in regard to mitigating these hazards.



If an operator encounters a small tree or large tree limb stuck between their blade and the cab of their dozer, the operator should consider the following:

1. Is the dozer in a safe area? Before conducting a size up, assess the surrounding area for any hazards, such as snags, loose rocks, unburned fuel between the dozer and active fire etc....
2. Has control of the implement(s) been compromised?
3. Experience level. A more experienced operator may be required in order to determine if the lodged material can safely be removed via manipulation of the dozer and or implement(s), while avoiding damage to the equipment.

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If the material is unable to be removed by articulation of the blade, the use of a hand saw or chainsaw may be required. If both operator and swamper determine that a chainsaw is the safest, most efficient means of removal, a qualified, carded sawyer, must be identified, and the following should be discussed among the operator, swamper, and/or sawyer before any action is taken:

- If there are multiple experienced and qualified sawyers available, it is recommended to have additional personnel present due to increased complexity. Any additional personnel should serve as an extra set of eyes for the sawyer. Under no circumstances should two sawyers attempt to cut the same piece of material simultaneously.
- Is there enough room to safely operate the saw without running the risk of hitting a hydraulic line or any other part of the dozer?
- Is the blade or dozer's position adding any additional pressure onto the lodged material? If so, how can that be mitigated before the sawyer begins cutting?
- Given the confined space between the dozer, its blade, and the hydraulic arms connecting the two, an escape route may not be possible. It is imperative that the sawyer maintain kerf observation, powerhead/throttle control and safe body positioning. A re-evaluation and size up must be conducted after every cutting sequence.