



19-E-0735. DOC-6121465

11 November 2019

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, dated 21 October 2019. You requested the following:

*“During the time DOC has existed, how many health and safety incidents have been recorded that were caused by falling trees or branches on or adjacent to public tracks on land managed by the Department?”*

*In relation to those incidents:*

*How many deaths have been recorded each year?*

*How many injuries (other than death) have been recorded each year?*

*How many near misses have been recorded each year?*

*Of each of those incidents and near misses:*

*Which occurred in National Parks?*

*Which involved naturally falling trees or branches (e.g. during strong wind)*

*How Which involved the use of chainsaws?”*

The Department only holds health and safety records for staff since 2002 when we implemented the Risk Manager software system for recording incidents. Prior to that we had no centralised system for recording incident information. I suggest that you approach ACC as this agency may hold some of the information you seek.

The Risk Manager system at the Department of Conservation is not generally used for visitor incidents. The records we hold do not usually identify whether the incident was on or adjacent to a track.

I have included a table below of known windfall incidents as these will all be on or alongside a track. These incidents only relate to staff who were injured, or where there was a near miss, while clearing the windfall. With two exceptions, there are no known incidents where staff or visitors were struck by windfall (where a tree or branches have fallen during a wind event or from decay), or through tree felling (where a tree or branches have fallen unexpectedly during a chainsaw operation), on or adjacent to a track. The two exceptions are:

- 1992, tourist killed by falling tree while camping near the Routeburn track
- 2019, members of family injured by a falling tree near the Shotover Jet operation, Queenstown. This incident was on a stretch of land administered by the Department, but not a National Park or track.

As you may be aware windfalls are a very common event and are usually cleared when they are on or near a track, or when they present a risk to the public. They will only enter Risk Manager if an incident or injury occurred as a result.

Year	Near miss	Fatal	Injury	Track	National Park?
2001	0	0	0		PCL
2002	0	0	2	2	PCL
2003	0	0	4		PCL
2004	0	0	1		PCL
2005	0	0	0		PCL
2006	0	0	0		PCL
2006	0	0	2		PCL
2007	2	0	0	1	PCL
2008	0	0	1	1	PCL
2009	1	0	1	1	PCL
2010	2	0	2	4	PCL
2011	0	0	0		PCL
2012	1	0	1		PCL
2013	0	0	1	1	1
2014	0	0	0		PCL
2015	0	0	0		PCL
2016	0	0	0		PCL
2017	0	0	0		PCL
2018	1	0	1	2	PCL
2019	1	0	0		PCL
Notes:	1. no records prior to 2002				
	2. assuming all windfall was across a track				
	3. all involved using a chainsaw while tree felling or clearing windfall				
	4. mostly unknown which are in a national park				
	5. No records kept where a tree has fallen but no people in the vicinity - this is a common occurrence				
	6. Most of the injuries were insignificant (one lost time)				

If you wish to discuss this with the Department, please contact me at [hmaher@doc.govt.nz](mailto:hmaher@doc.govt.nz), ph [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Harry Maher,  
Director Health and Safety