

Safety Alert

Recently a contractor's employee who operates a grapple skidder suffered an injury when his knee hit the steering column. In this incident the operator was driving the skidder while he was twisted to the left in his seat so he could look out the left side of the machine to observe some branches & tree tops he was maneuvering around. In positioning himself this way, the operator's right knee was located in very close proximity to the steering column. In the course of this activity, the skidder blade hit an obstacle jolting the skidder to a sudden stop. The operators knee was then jammed into the steering column causing injury to his knee and hip.

A review of the positioning of the operators knee in proximity to the steering column indicated a space of 5-10 cm only between the knee and the steering column when the operator is positioned with some "twist" in the seat. The seat belt did not prevent the knee from contacting the steering column given the little space in between.



Recommendation:

We recommend that contractors assess their skidders and consider affixing some (foam) padding to the steering column along the portion that is at risk of sudden contact with knees & legs. This padding will provide cushioning in the event of unexpected sudden impacts.