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## North Vancouver girl, 5, seriously injured after tree falls on her in Highlands schoolyard Monday

Jane Seyd / North Shore News  
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This article raises the point of whether large trees (which sooner or later come down) are appropriate in residential and especially in or near public assembly areas. - cjk

An RCMP cruiser sits outside Highland elementary Tuesday morning. A five-year-old student was struck by a falling tree Monday afternoon while outside in the schoolyard with classmates and a teacher. photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

A five-year-old girl was rushed to B.C. Children's Hospital with serious injuries and remains in a medically induced coma after being struck by a falling tree while outside with her class on the school grounds of Highlands elementary Monday.

The girl was in serious but stable condition Tuesday afternoon after suffering head injuries and internal injuries after being hit by the tree.

Counsellors were at the elementary school Tuesday morning to speak with the girl's classmates and with teachers and staff.

"Everyone is concerned," said Victoria Miles, spokeswoman for the North Vancouver School District. "They understand it's a serious accident."

The accident happened just before the end of the school day, between 2:30 and 3 p.m. Monday afternoon. Children in the class were outside with their teacher taking part in an activity near the north border of the school grounds, when there was a loud cracking sound from a neighbouring property, said Cpl. Richard De Jong, spokesman for the North Vancouver RCMP.

"The teacher observed the tree falling and told the kids to run," he said. The girl was hit by part of the tree that broke off and crashed down on to the schoolyard.

Emergency crews were on the scene very quickly, and the girl was rushed to hospital.

Miles said a letter went home to parents yesterday explaining what had happened and the school principal met with staff Tuesday morning. Counselling has been provided to any students or staff who need it, she added.

According to arborists, the tree that hit the little girl was a hemlock, approximately 18 metres (60 feet) tall and 60 centimetres (two feet) in diameter at the base, said Miles.

The tree, which was growing about four metres (14 feet) away from the edge of the school grounds on a private property, broke near the base. The part of the tree that hit the girl was about 25 centimetres (10 inches) wide.

Miles didn't have any information about how old the tree was, or whether it was rotten, but said it hadn't been previously identified as a hazard.

"There are trees bordering many of our properties," she said.

Miles said once the arborist's report is complete, it will go to the board of trustees who will consider any recommendations.

"We don't have a program of surveying trees that are not on our property, but at the same time we have a responsibility to student safety," she said. "Right now there are more questions than answers."

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