

Accident Research Helps Save Lives of Loggers

Research Brief # 33

Louisiana Forest Products Development Center
School of Renewable Natural Resources
Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-6202

Situation/Problem According to the Louisiana Department of Labor, about 3,000 Louisianians support their livelihood and families by harvesting and transporting timber. Logging is one of the most dangerous occupations. About 200 Louisiana loggers annually are injured so badly that they miss over a week of work. In 1999 and 2000, eight loggers were killed on-the-job. Workers' compensation insurance premium rates for loggers are roughly one-third of payroll. The average direct cost per major injury is well in excess of \$30,000. Indirect costs, such as lost production, are over \$180,000 per major injury.

Action A reduction in the pain, suffering and cost of logging accidents must begin with an understanding of the accidents and the factors that lead up to them. As part of the Strategic Partnership Agreement between logging companies and the federal Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA), 257 logging companies agreed to submit their accident reports annually to the Louisiana Logging Council (LLC) for review by the Louisiana Forest Products Development Center. The collective results are used to train loggers how to work more safely. For example, twenty percent of the accidents were sprained knees incurred while mounting/dismounting equipment. Once that became known, training and safety inspections began including proper mounting/dismounting procedures.

Preliminary Results For 2003, twenty percent of the companies stated that they had experienced accidents. This is down from 28 percent in 2001. The major problem areas/factors are repairs and maintenance, age, mounting/dismounting trucks, use of personal protective equipment, task space and procedures, and communication. Half of the machine operator injuries happened while performing repairs or maintenance. The average age of the injured loggers (and logging workforce) is rising. In almost 40% of the cases, age seems to be a factor in slipping, tripping or straining a muscle. Mounting / dismounting accidents were a big problem in the past, but no accidents of this kind were reported for 2003 for machine operators. However, half of the truck driver accidents were slips encountered when mounting or dismounting loaders. Wearing personal protective equipment would have helped with some of the injuries - saw cuts, dust in eyes, etc. In some cases, workers appeared

class=Section2>

to be too close to each other. In other cases, workers were helping each other, but one worker was still vulnerable to the actions of another. This appeared to be a factor in both of the fatal accidents and many other accidents. Training, defined work procedures, lockout / tagout programs and communication are keys to preventing these types of accidents.

Better communication between workers might have prevented some of the accidents.

Impact

Accident rates in the industry have fallen by 28% since 2000. Fatal logging accidents in Louisiana have dropped to one or two per year. Although these numbers can vary year-to-year, the increasing number of loggers who are trained in safety is constant. By cooperating with the Louisiana Logging Council, 120 loggers attended safety workshops in 2003, and 340 loggers attended in 2004. The Louisiana Forest Products Development Center played a major role in these workshops and continues to present the results of new logging safety research to nearly every logging company and supervisor in the state through articles in the Council's quarterly trade journal, The Louisiana Logger.

Research Team

Cornelis "Niels" F. de Hoop, Associate Professor, Louisiana Forest Products Development Center, Baton Rouge, LA.
Wilfred James Hebert, Safety & Health Officer, USDL Occupational Safety & Health Administration, Baton Rouge, LA.
Dorinda Folsie, Safety & Health Officer, USDL Occupational Safety & Health Administration, Baton Rouge, LA.
Jody Campo, OSHA Safety Consultant, Louisiana Department of Labor, Baton Rouge, LA.
Clovis "Sonny" Mills, OSHA Safety Consultant, Louisiana Department of Labor, Baton Rouge, LA.
Clyde M. Todd, Jr., Executive Director, Louisiana Logging Council, Alexandria, LA.
C.A. "Buck" Vandersteen, Executive Director, Louisiana Forestry Association, Alexandria, LA.

Target Group

Loggers, wood dealers, log supply managers, timberland managers, logging insurers, loss prevention specialists.

Contact

Cornelis F. de Hoop, Associate Professor
Louisiana Forest Products Development Center
LSU Renewable Natural Resources Bldg.
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-6202 USA
cdehoop@lsu.edu
Tel: 225-578-4242
Fax: 225-578-4251
Organization's Home Page: <http://www.rnr.lsu.edu/lfpdc/>