

# harvest report

Information and Risk Management Ideas for Harvesting Operations

## Drive Smart, Stay Safe

### How to Prevent Problems and Keep Your Business on Track

**ACCIDENTS** are a fact of life, especially when you're in the business of hauling heavy moving objects (i.e., logs and equipment) on very large trucks. If you're in the logging industry, you know the typical hazards: narrow roads, poor (if any) paving, steep grades and curves, and soft shoulders. Couple that with poor visibility and unprotected intersections, and you've got a recipe for things going wrong. And that doesn't even take into account the *other* drivers on the road.

Do you know your company's accident track record? If you're like most companies, you're tracking the data and know the performance of your trucks and drivers. If not, it's important to understand the data and what it can tell you. In addition to your own records, the Department of Transportation has a website, *SafeStat* (<http://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov>), that lets you slice and dice your data, along with that of your competitors and the industry as a whole. You can pull up all kinds of information: truck problems, motor vehicle violations, accident reports, and more.

Whether you have a great performance record or are striving for improvement, there are some best practices that can help you mitigate your risks. *Harvest Report* talked to Tony Tijerina, a fire expert, loss control consultant, and president of Tijerina Investigations, about how to keep your business on track. Here are six things you need to do:

#### 1. Hire Qualified Drivers—and then Train Them

While this may seem obvious, not every truck driver is trained to drive a logging truck with very heavy loads that shift in transit. It's important to ensure that every driver you put on the road is equipped to handle the job. In addition, Tijerina stresses the value of ongoing driver training (including annual defensive driving courses).

#### 2. Develop a Site-Specific Plan

"Companies should create a site-specific plan every time they change

a job site," says Tijerina. "The driver and the owner should go out and travel from the job site to the mill." Potential hazard areas to identify include road hazards (e.g., poor visibility, construction zones), small towns, and unmarked driveways. If there's a steep winding curve, for example, note that as a place where drivers should be prepared to drop speed. An unmarked driveway? Be prepared to brake so you don't have to stop suddenly if a car darts out in front of you. And, once you have a plan, be sure to update it as conditions on the ground evolve (see also #3).

#### 3. Educate Your Drivers

No plan has value if it is sitting on a shelf. This means that every driver on that route needs to have the site plan, and recognize the risks. Tijerina recommends that companies talk about these plans during safety sessions and at other employee meetings.

#### 4. Make Your Drivers Your Eyes and Ears

No one knows the roads better than the people who are traveling them each day. "Drivers have to take ownership," says Tijerina, "and pass information

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#### 5. Hold Safety Meetings

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that companies hold safety meetings at least once a month. "Weekly would be best," suggests Tijerina, who notes that these meetings are a great opportunity to not only review your site-specific plans, but also to cover such topics as defensive driving, proper use of a fire extinguisher, and the key elements of the driver's daily truck safety



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inspection. Plus, don't forget to issue reminders that texting, tweeting, or even talking on a mobile phone while driving are risky, unacceptable, and illegal in some states.

### 6. Keep Good Inspection Logs

"Keeping a daily record of each truck inspection forces the driver to do more than just go through the motions," says Tijerina. In addition, companies should do weekly inspections, and routine servicing every 15,000 miles or so.

Your drivers are often the public face of your company. After all, it's your brand

on the side of the trucks they're driving. So driving smart and staying safe isn't just about avoiding that one accident. It's also about how other people see you over time.

Finally, it's important to keep in mind that your company is responsible for any subcontractors who are operating on your behalf. This means having a written contract with hold harmless and indemnification language and specific insurance requirements to include naming your company under an additional insured endorsement. And make sure that everyone adheres

to your safety and risk mitigation plans.

*Harvest Report thanks Tony Tijerina, president of Tijerina Investigations, for his assistance: 1541 Laurel River Trail, Lawrenceville, GA 30043-3671; tel: 770-335-7930; email: [tony@tjjerinainvestigations.com](mailto:tony@tijerinainvestigations.com).*

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