

harvest report

Information and Risk Management Ideas for Harvesting Operations

Don't Let Hazards Delimb Your Cutting Operations

Knowing the Risks and Taking Steps to Mitigate Them Can Save You Time and Money

LOGGING is an inherently dangerous business. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the industry employed 86,000 workers in 2008 and accounted for 93 deaths. This rate is 30 times higher than the overall fatality rate in the United States. The dangers are not just for employees, but also for third parties.

There are some common hazards in the logging industry that, left unchecked, may cause injury to your employees or others as well as property damage. Three common examples are:

- **Fuel Sources**—including hydraulic fluid, diesel fuel, plastics, and rubber in hose coatings, wire insulation, and other places
- **Ignition Sources**—including electrical wiring, engine surfaces, turbo chargers, manifolds, friction heat from moving parts (i.e., sparks), and warming fires
- **Overcutting/Timber Trespass**

Many accidents are unavoidable; hence the word *accident*, which dictionary.com describes as “any event that happens unexpectedly, without a deliberate plan or cause.” The risks, however, can be mitigated with good training and other smart business planning.

Three strategies are crucial:

1. Take steps to prevent fires and other accidents from occurring;

2. Identify boundary lines and train feller operators; and
3. Put an emergency response plan in place.

Prevention is Key

There are a number of prevention strategies that can help:

- Clean equipment regularly;
- Inspect equipment daily;
- Repair fluid leaks and frayed or worn wiring immediately;
- Adhere to manufacturers' recommended practices and service intervals; and
- Comply with, or exceed, fire watch requirements.

“There are some common hazards in the logging industry that, left unchecked, may cause injury to your employees...”

In addition, “following afternoon shutdown and fire watch procedures is critical,” says Tony Tijerina, a fire expert, loss control consultant, and president of Tijerina Investigations. “There’s always a temperature spike when the equipment is shut down because, with the fan off, there’s nothing drawing away heat.” He also advises companies to make sure that there is no flammable debris stuck in the equipment.

Tijerina told *Harvest Report* that companies need to identify who at each job site will be responsible for the

watch period in compliance with state, federal, and contract requirements. In addition, he notes the importance of understanding not only the regulations put in place by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), but also your own state and local regulations. California, for example, has rigorous fire watch procedures that include requirements for keeping specific fire prevention tools ready and accessible.

Regarding fire prevention, training is vital. Fire extinguishers will have limited value if employees don’t know how to use them effectively to both put out a fire and control the spread of one.

Other fire equipment that may be on your job site includes water tanks and supplemental water sources. Employees need to know where the equipment is and how to quickly hook it up and make it operational.

Markers and Training Help

While overcutting is more an oversight or error-based risk than a hazard *per se*, it can also cost your company money in terms of both damages and downtime. The good news is that there are some steps you can take to mitigate your risk.



Schinnerer Insurance Services
2520 Venture Oaks Way, Suite 250
Sacramento, CA 95833

Presort Standard
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 6301
Washington, DC

harvest report

Information and Risk Management Ideas for Harvesting Operations

Don't Let Hazards Delimb Your Cutting Operations

"It's important to do your homework upfront," says Tijerina, "including having a professional forester physically mark the trees and identify the property boundaries." He adds that the plat isn't always perfect, and can sometimes, in fact, be wrong. "It may seem expensive and time-consuming to mark the boundaries in advance," he says, "but doing it right the first time will often save money down the line." This helps to assure compliance with state, federal, and contract requirements.

Once the property lines are properly identified and marked, it's important to train feller operators in how to locate and observe the markings.

In an Emergency, Seconds Count

The third key strategy to minimize injury and damage is to have an emergency response plan in place. Tijerina stresses the importance of knowing the GPS coordinates for every job site (and updating the coordinates when a crew relocates) to make it possible for support to reach even the most remote location as quickly as possible. In addition, make sure someone on site is equipped with a mobile phone (if the site is in signal range), a satellite phone, or a shortwave radio so that you can call for help in an emergency. Having a first aid kit (an OSHA requirement) is also critical.

Finally, when thinking about hazards and responses, it's important to keep in mind that your company is responsible for any subcontractors who are operating on your behalf. After you qualify them based on their experience, safety training, and risk mitigation plans, make sure they provide you with certificates verifying adequate insurance and naming you as an additional insured and, preferably, holding you harmless by contract.

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.

Schinnerer's risk management resources have been prepared solely for the purpose of sharing general information regarding insurance and practice management issues and are not intended to constitute legal advice or a determination on issues of coverage. Schinnerer Insurance Services makes no representations about the accuracy, completeness, or relevance of this information.

Schinnerer policyholders have a non-exclusive, revocable license to reproduce this information for in-firm and client educational purposes. No other republication or redistribution of this material is allowed without the approval of Schinnerer Insurance Services.