



FORESTRY MUTUAL NEWS

Newsletter of the Forestry Mutual Insurance Company

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Over the past few months, I have fielded numerous questions from several of our policyholders in the logging field about the NCFA's ProLogger program. In most cases, loggers are inquiring about their course credits. It is important to note that the ProLogger program was established as a collaborative effort by the NCFA and the N.C. Department of Labor back in 1994 after we suffered double-digit deaths (13) in the logging field in 1993. Three years ago, the NCFA added a continuing education element to the program to address the environmental pressures being applied to the forest products industry.

As most of you know, our chainsaw trainer, Bryan Wagner, plays a key role in most of these safety programs. Consequently, we are happy to report that our losses due to logger injuries, which once represented nearly 60% of our payouts, have dropped dramatically since Bryan came on board.

By this time, you should have received a student profile sheet from the NCFA if you are a ProLogger. Please check the course credit information and the personal information on the sheet and return any changes to the NCFA's office. If you are a ProLogger and have not received a form, you should contact the NCFA immediately at (800) 231-7723. Your active involvement in this process will ensure that you get the course credit you deserve. ■



Forestry Mutual President Keith Biggs

RONNIE ANDREWS: A VIEW FROM THE TOP OF THE HILL

Logger Ronnie Andrews isn't one to complain nor is he one likely to sugar coat his words. He's a mountain logger. That's what he signed up to do, but it doesn't mean that he won't take the opportunity to have some fun with Weyerhaeuser procurement forester, Amy Phillips, when discussing job assignments. Recently, Phillips, who has been Andrews' Weyerhaeuser contact over the past nine years, showed Andrews his next assignment in Surry County that featured steep rises on each side of the plot with a stream branch down in the bottom.

"She called it a hill," stated Andrews with a chuckle. "When I saw it, I told her my house sits on a hill. But, I was hired as a mountain logger so I guess I messed up from the very beginning."

Kidding aside, Andrews, enjoys his contract logger agreement with Weyerhaeuser since it lends itself to predictability between and on the job.

"It keeps you in a job," stated Andrews. "Once you get on a track of timber, you aren't going to have any problems over the lines. If you do, you just call Weyerhaeuser and they will straighten it out. They are really good at looking over their jobs. No trouble."

Phillips couldn't agree more.

"If I had timber of my own, he would be the one I would want to cut it," explained Phillips. "He is very conscientious, very professional. He would never cut corners or sacrifice the quality of his job. I can put him on a job and I don't have to go see him until the job is done."



Logger Ronnie Andrews has been working in the woods his entire life. He is a contract logger for Weyerhaeuser and runs a three-man crew.

By all accounts, Andrews, 45, may be one of the industry's best representatives of the modern logger. Learning the trade at an early age from his father, Andrews blends the traditional logger traits of diligence, persistence and independence along with techniques that improve safety and environmental stewardship while working in the woods.

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Ronnie Andrews: A View from the Top of the Hill...(from page 1)

"We assign our loggers pretty much by what comes available," explained Phillips. "But, if we got a tract with some sensitive issues, Ronnie may get that opportunity because of his professionalism and his demeanor. He works extremely well with people, particularly land-owners."

Like many in his field, Andrews got an early start on his logging career through an apprenticeship with his father, Al Andrews. The elder Andrews began logging with a cross cut saw, supplying three or four different area sawmills. By the time Ronnie came along, Al had established his own portable sawmill/logging operation.

"I was logging and sawmilling when I was eight years old," stated Andrews.

Ronnie continued to work for his dad through a high school program and joined his dad full time upon graduation. In 1985, he purchased the company from his father, who retired. Ronnie learned plenty from his dad, but he is quick to point out that his world of logging does not resemble the same environment his dad operated in.

"He knew how to log the old way," stated Andrews. "There's a lot of difference in what we do now from his days."

For Andrews, the most glaring example of this change in focus for the logging field is the emphasis on protecting water quality. This emphasis proves to be particularly challenging for those loggers who earn a living while on the incline.

"If you don't know something about working the mountain, you cannot work it," stated an emphatic Andrews. "Flatland and mountain loggers are entirely different. You cannot get the first tree without building a road to it."

While all logging jobs take a high-degree of planning and preparation, Andrews and his fellow mountain loggers are called upon to build roads and skid trails on a terrain that can pose serious environmental and safety challenges. Most must be excellent bulldozer operators who are skilled in building and shaping the roads that will carry the timber from the woods.

"On a scale of 1-10, Ronnie is a 10," stated Mike Adams, procurement forester of LP-Roaring River.

"He is a cutting edge logger for this part of the world, and he is one of the best road builders I have ever seen. He just has that knack."

In planning out his approach, Andrews relies on the plot lines, which in most cases were set by Amy Phillips and several different maps of the particular tract.

"You have to be able to see how to get the timber," stated Andrews while pointing across to the timber that stands on top of a ridge in the distance. "You cannot go right down that hollow and get over to there. You would tear the world down. You gotta have it in your head how to work the ridges."

In essence, Andrews looks at the lay of the land to determine not only where he is going to start his operation, but on each step of the way in terms of skid trails. He also looks to the sky. In most situations, Andrews likes to construct one skid trail that lies close to the tract boundary, which provides him continuous access and limits the amount of crossroads through a given tract. And while this makes environmental sense, it also proves to save Andrews in the wallet as well.

"The more roads or skid trails I build, the more it is going to cost me," stated Andrews. "On each road, I have to grade it for the skidder to run on and then I have to go back and water break it."

Basically, water breaks are turn-outs in roads made from earth by a bulldozer that divert rainwater off of the road or trail into the side of the hill. These water breaks help to minimize the amount of sedimentation that may run down a road into a nearby stream while also eliminating the chance of the road washing out.

"It takes a lot of time to build water bars," stated Andrews. "For every place where you see red dirt, you have to go back and put water bars on it. It's not just the truck roads. It's on every skid trail. You start at the bottom and you build to the top and you turn them out. You don't start at the top. If you build one at the top or if you don't build enough, they'll just blow out. The steeper the slope, the closer you put the bars."

Andrews also plans his harvest in a pattern that allows him to stabi-

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THE SAWSHOP

by Bryan Wagner
Chainsaw Trainer for
Forestry Mutual



TRENDS - LOOK UP!

In past articles, I discussed some trends that are associated with the logging industry. For your review, trends are described as a reoccurring type of incident or act. Previously, the trends of working too close and falls have been studied. This column will deal with overhead hazards - **look up!**

Over the past ten years, serious life threatening injuries and deaths have occurred. The majority of these accidents have happened in the last quarter of the year. More specifically, most happen during the holiday season. The root cause of these incidents has been overhead hazards. The holiday season brings excitement and joy to all and often times we may lose focus on our jobs in the woods. Since our jobs are inherently dangerous, one wrong decision can prove catastrophic in a heartbeat. We must stay focused on the job at hand. Risk must be identified and dealt with to prevent a loss. Please take the time to have a safety briefing with your crew on **OVERHEAD HAZARDS.**

Heads Up for Hazards

- ✓ Use approved, well maintained personal protective equipment (PPE) for head protection.
- ✓ Look and scan at least 50 ahead on your ground path.
- ✓ Look and scan for at least 100 feet ahead for all overhead hazards.
- ✓ Do not place your body under anything that can fall due to gravity or the loss of hydraulic pressure.
- ✓ Maintain at least two tree lengths from all felling areas. (300 feet or 100 yards)
- ✓ Be visible, wear high visibility clothing.
- ✓ Maintain communication with everyone in the work area.
- ✓ Never walk into a work area with running or moving equipment until the equipment is stopped, engine cut-off and the hydraulic attachments grounded.

In nearly every accident, it is the ground personnel who are risk from hazards from above. As a team, work together and stay focused. Take the time to look for overhead hazards, then identify the hazard, tell everyone about it, and remove it or flag it to keep personnel away. Your proper decisions will result in a happy holiday season for all. **LOOK UP!■**



(l-r) Andrews poses with his crew Steve Livingston and William Absber during a lunch break. This trio has worked together for the past eight years.

What You Should Know About Criminal Liability

By Jimmy McCraney

You should be aware that there is an increasing trend toward pressing criminal charges against employers, managers and supervisors when safety and health violations result in the serious injury or death of an employee.

There are several causes that have contributed to the increases in job-related injuries and fatalities. Most notably though, is the lack of direct supervision. Management and supervisors must be involved in planning and directing daily work activities and knowing the hazards of the workplace. Supervisors must get involved in all aspects of the job, including correct known hazards, conduct workplace safety inspections, perform job assessments for unknown hazards, ensure employees wear proper personal protective equipment and enforce safety policies and safety rules.

Recently, an employer was fined \$140,000 and a supervisor was sentenced to a year in jail after an employee was electrocuted. The employer had received notifications and several warnings that no work was to be done until a power line crossing the facility was de-energized (locked and tagged out) prior to any work being accomplished. Despite the warnings, the employer failed to correct the situation. The supervisor having knowledge of the hazardous situation, neglected the warning to de-energize the line, and instructed an employee to operate a company truck. The supervisor guided the truck across the yard and directed the driver to raise the truck bed under the energized power lines. The driver was severely burned and died at the scene.

The law is clear, employers and supervisors must make the safety of employees a high priority. A thorough evaluation of all operations and safety programs must be completed to be sure they are in compliance with state

and OSHA regulations. Employers must establish procedures to follow in the event of a health or safety incident or event in your workplace. Develop and implement a plan on recording and responding to employees' safety and health concerns. Ensure the responsible level of management is involved and knowledgeable enough to deal with the situation. Follow-up all concerns for details that could result in corrective action. Lastly, never neglect to provide feedback to employees on the progress of their concern(s).

Make it clear to your employees that you are responding to their concern. Document all concerns and responses clearly and completely. Place a record in the appropriate subject file and make sure data can be retrieved easily.

Make sure your employees are aware of all possible hazards through verbal, written and posted warnings. You need to take special care with employees who have disabilities or difficulties with English. The use of an interpreter may be necessary to ensure those who do not understand the English language fully understand your safety policies and rules. Develop a plan for handling a crisis and make sure your employees know their roles in carrying it out.

The best defense, of course, is prevention, and the best preventive measure is to enforce accepted safety standards strictly and never cut corners where health and safety are concerned. Know your responsibilities so you don't get caught up in a criminally liable" situation. ■



SAFETY ALERT

by J.J. Lemire

Loss Control Representative
for Forestry Mutual

OPERATOR KILLED BY SAWHEAD

Last issue, we highlighted a topper that was killed from being too close to a running sawhead feller buncher. This issue we sadly report about an operator that walked in front of his feller buncher and was killed.

BACKGROUND

On a hot and clear summer day, a mechanized crew was cutting a tract of timber that was a mixed pine and hardwood stand. While cutting some trees, the rubber-tired buncher slid off into a ditch on the left side. The skidder was backed up and the feller buncher operator hooked the cable to the rear of the buncher.

Since the buncher almost tipped over, they repositioned the skidder and the buncher operator hooked the cable to the backside of the sawhead.

The buncher was pulled out of the ditch and stopped as trees boxed in both machines. For the third time, the buncher operator gets out of the cab, but this time he goes around the



front of the buncher since the ditch prevented him from going around the back side. He crosses in front of the cutting head to remove the cable. Due to the excessive ground debris, he turned sideways and placed his right foot forward towards the turning blade (weighs approximately 600 pounds) that was about 4-6 inches off the ground. As his right leg went forward, his pant leg hit the turning blade and it spun him around and caused him to fall, striking his head and left shoulder on the turning blade. The momentum of the blade threw him to the ground, some three feet away.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The sawhead operator was a 40-year old man with one-month experience behind the controls. He was considered fully trained and was a good employee with over 10 years working in the woods.

UNSAFE ACTS

The operator failed to stop the sawhead completely prior to dismantling the machine, failed to ground the blade and he walked in front of a turning sawhead blade.

INJURY

The operator suffered a massive head injury as well as a severe open wound to the left shoulder.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NEVER WALK IN FRONT OF OR NEAR A TURNING SAWHEAD! Always ground the blade to stop it from turning.

Employers must train and educate employees on the dangers as well as the proper operating procedures for this type of hazardous equipment and **stress safety** around mechanized logging equipment. ■

Ronnie Andrews: A View from the Top of the Hill...(from page 2)

lize the skid roads as he moves through the tract by starting at the bottom and then working his way up the side of the mountain, leaving tree tops and limbs to stabilize the road.

"We get up above an existing road and cut the timber," explained Andrews. "We let it fall in the road and then top them. We will leave the tops in the road to keep it from washing."

Protecting roads and skid trails from becoming potential sources of erosion in a heavy rain is extremely important and so too are the buffer areas for streams. Andrews' work in establishing buffers is one of the things that distinguishes from other loggers and the methodology behind it, is vintage Andrews. Simply put, he combines his knowledge of the mountains, his technical expertise, and a healthy dose of common sense to execute a perfect buffer.

"Where it is steep, we leave more," stated Andrews. "Where it isn't steep, we get more, but we do not take the shade off of the creek."

Pointing to a buffer in his current job, Andrews is quite proud of his crew's work.

"You can walk right up that

buffer strip on that creek and you are not going to see a limb broken out of a tree," stated Andrews. "We took care of those trees. The timber was cut away from the buffer."

Andrews and his crew have earned the reputation over the years as being reliable, conscientious and capable of navigating a track of timber with great care. In some cases where Weyerhaeuser has purchased timber from a consulting forester, this forester will take the time to mark the buffer and designated certain trees to be harvested from the buffer.

"Lots of them have told me that they felt like they had to make it bullet-proof," explained Andrews. "If they had known I was going to cut the job, they wouldn't have bothered because they know that I cut a good buffer strip."

Andrews' ability to maintain stability amongst his three-member staff is also one of the reasons why this mountain logger is so successful at stabilizing soils. His timber cutter, William Absher, has been with him for 15 years. Steve Livingston has been driving one of Andrews' skidders for eight years and Ronnie's brother, Roger, has been the company's truck driver for two years.

As the boss logger, Andrews fills in whatever role needed on the job. He and his wife, Susan, maintain the company's books.

Andrews, a graduate of the NCFA's ProLogger program, was named Forestry Mutual's Outstanding Logger of the Year in 2003 for his exceptional work combined with his safety record. A feat that is not easy to achieve in mountain terrain.

"When it comes to logging in the mountains, there aren't many better ones than Ronnie Andrews," stated Forestry Mutual President Keith Biggs. "Everyone around here knows that he is an 'a-number one' logger who takes a lot of pride in his work."

Similar to the increased emphasis on water, Andrews has witnessed his profession's increased awareness on safety. Hard hats, steel tip boots and chaps have all been necessary improvements in the equipment loggers rely on in the woods.

Early on, Andrews had an incident where his timber cutter had forgotten to wear his chaps one day. As fate would have it, the timber cutter nicked his leg during the day, leading Andrews to drive him to the hospital for a few stitches.

"I made the decision right then that power saws aren't going to be cranked without chaps on," stated Andrews.

Andrews maintains this edict not only out of respect for his employees, but also out of necessity. He stresses that he will never sacrifice safety for the sake of production. In the long run, it simply doesn't pay.

"If you are out here and needing workers' comp, you aren't going to be able to afford it if you have accidents," warned Andrews. "That's just the fact of it. If you aren't going to be safe on the job, you aren't going to be on my job."

So while Andrews may give Phillips a hard time about the "hills" that she picks out for him, it's not likely that Ronnie will be leaving the profession in the near future. While his mind may be on the cutting edge of the logging world, his heart still beats to the same rhythm as most loggers - that's the rhythm of independence.

"I have never had a boss, and I don't reckon I want one," Andrews stated while summing up what takes him to the woods each day. "I kind of do as I want to." ■



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