



FORESTRY MUTUAL NEWS

Newsletter of the Forestry Mutual Insurance Company

Vol. 17, Issue 3

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK...

Just when I thought we might be getting a little reprieve from truck wrecks, here they come again. I don't know who turned the light switch back on, but in July and so far in August, it seems that I hear about a log truck accident on a daily basis.

One simple question that keeps coming up in my mind is, just how hard it is to keep all tires on the road? It seems like most of what I hear about is the driver runs off the road and then over-corrects. I hope at some point in the near future I will not have to mention truck accidents in an article.

Consequently, we are going to make some changes in our business method. We are going to spend more time engaged with the truck owners and drivers to see if all of us can get a better handle on these crashes.

As everyone has experienced, there are fewer and fewer carriers willing to write commercial vehicles for our industry. Remember, unlike workers compensation, this is truly a volunteer market. The only way we can get carriers back in this market is by showing better results. Hopefully, through Team Safe Trucking and other ventures, we will be able to get a more trained driver and hopefully entice some younger

drivers to enter the workforce.

As you know, our policyholders can pay online with a bank draft, but to pay with a credit card, our policyholders have to call in to our office. We expect to add the ability to pay with a credit card online in the first quarter of 2019.

In September, we mailed a reminder to our policyholders about the requirement to have a drug testing program for commercial drivers, meaning those with Class A, CDL licenses. Your field representative is the point of contact to obtain more information. The field representatives should have been in contact with 100% of all our policyholders to explain the new policy that becomes effective January 2019.

Some good news is that we ended year with a good loss ratio and added surplus to our bottom line. Remember this is really good news because you the policyholders own the company and benefit by our collective success. We also have been approved to operate in Mississippi so we will be enlarging our business footprint in the Southeast.

I personally would like to again thank our policyholders for their business. We strive to add value through our services and programs to our policyholders. Safety is our top priority.

Sincerely,

Keith S. Biggs



Keith Biggs

NEW DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING NOW REQUIRED FOR ALL TRUCK DRIVERS

Commercial Driver Licensed (CDL) driver accidents are tragic but preventable. Many of the drivers injured or killed recently have tested positive for illegal drugs. Their judgement was impaired, and the decisions they made affected their own lives and the lives of others in the path of their trucks.

To combat injuries and the suffering caused by employees under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol, FMIC will now require that all policyholders with commercial (CDL) truck drivers comply with the federal guidelines for their drivers. Most of our policyholders already comply and we thank you. However, for those companies that do not have these programs, we will require you to follow the federal mandates.

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Trucking continues to be a top safety issue for the forest products industry.



THE SAWSHOP

by Bryan Wagner
Chainsaw Trainer for
Forestry Mutual

PLAN YOUR ESCAPE TO GET OUT OF DODGE!

Hello everyone! Last quarter we discussed the hinge wood of the tree during the felling process. Remember, the hinge is the “steering wheel” of the falling stem. If the hinge stays intact, the tree goes where the hinge tells it to. The hinge also tries to keep the falling tree “glued” to the stump during its controlled fall to the ground. The notch angle tells the hinge when it’s time to release. We try to use a notch angle of 70-90 degrees. When a falling stem is controlled through most of its fall, the chance of rebound is lessened. Accurate felling lessens the risk of “brushing” other trees, which could result in a falling or thrown limb injury. Accurate felling also protects the residual stand of timber from damage, thus making the job look good.

Now, with our short review session looked at, let’s get into the third step of the manual felling plan, the escape route. Get Out of Dodge!!

ESCAPE

I’m going to start this section with a chilling figure. *Approximately 94% of all manual felling fatalities happen within eight feet from the stump!* As a trainer, I can fix this relatively easy. Get away from the stump, **Get Out of Dodge!** If you look at it, there’s nothing but **BAD** that can happen within eight feet from a falling tree! Prevalent risk and exposure items such as falling or thrown limbs, along with the chance of the stem being rebounded back or sideways are present inside the eight-foot circle. Some of you have heard me use the term killer circle, well, it is! Let’s plan to get out of there!

A proper escape route should be a 45-degree angle away from the fall of the tree. The escape route must be clear of debris, so a quick retreat can be made. Try to escape on the *good-side* of the tree! The *bad-side* of the tree is the weighted side. When working on steep terrain, typically the down-hill side is the bad-side. During the 45-degree retreat from a falling tree, the timber-cutter should have his eyes to the sky. We must look for possible falling or thrown objects. If possible, try to put standing timber in between you and the falling tree. Again, get out of that eight feet, kill zone! Get as far away from the falling stem as you can! Get Out of Dodge!

(continued on page 4)



(far right) Bryan Wagner reviews proper felling technique during a logger training field day.



AGENCY CORNER

by Nick Carter
Forestry Mutual Insurance
Agency Manager

IS YOUR COMPANY PREPARED TO PERSEVERE?

Like all businesses, our policyholders face unknown challenges on a daily basis. Just a few daily challenges that loggers face every day include: Will all my help show up? What kind of equipment breakdown will occur today, and am I prepared to fix it? Is it too wet to work? Where will I find my next truck driver to comply with insurance guidelines? Will one of my trucks get pulled over by DOT? If so, will I be in compliance?

The ability to overcome these unexpected challenges starts with proper planning, documentation and attention to detail. Forestry Mutual’s newest drug and alcohol testing requirement is a program that will enhance our policyholders day-to-day operations and protect them in the case of an accident.

With the new Forestry Mutual drug and alcohol testing requirement going in to effect January 1st, 2019, FMIC Insurance Agency will be able to help our policyholders meet these requirements. The reality is that everyday one of our trucks encounters another person on the road that is either under the influence of alcohol or drugs. With the growing epidemic of opioid overdoses in the U.S. this number is staggering, and our truck drivers and families also share the roadways with these people. This is one reason why trucking is one of the most dangerous job in America.

Once you hire an employee, not only your company name but also your personal name and reputation is on the side of that truck. The driver represents your company with his actions. How will you protect your name and reputation?

The first and foremost way is to comply with federal laws that mandate all CDL drivers to be in a random drug testing consortium and have a pre-employment drug test performed. Did you know that if you are not complying with this guideline that the fine is \$2,500 per driver or higher? Furthermore, what if you are not complying and had a wreck where the driver tested positive for drugs? Well that fine is more than \$6,500 so now you are at a whopping \$9,000 for not complying with just one driver. Not to mention the cost of the actual claim and insurance cost that could relate to the incident.

So how can FMIC Insurance Agency help you get in compliance with drug/alcohol testing requirement?

- 1) A written program complying with the guidelines to include testing procedures, disciplinary actions, and driver safety rules signed by each driver. We have a host of preferred vendors that can help you comply for less than \$300/year up to 50 employees and half of that for up to 10. We also have the Truck Driver Employer checklist booklet.
- 2) A list of all current drivers and their current motor vehicle report (MVR) for each driver. If our agency writes your commercial auto coverage, our agency must submit the MVR to the carrier at renewal each year. This fee is \$8 - \$12 dollars per driver and that is a service we provide. We have MVR release forms that the driver needs to sign, and we will gladly provide all your driver’s MVR’s to you to comply free of charge.
- 3) Your FMIC field representative will need a document that shows that all drivers are enrolled in a consortium. If you sign up with one of the preferred vendors, they will place you in a consortium that complies with the FMCSA requirement and this would be readily available.

PREPARING FOR AN OSHA INSPECTION

by Jimmy McCraney, Forestry Mutual

During my visits with our policyholders, I receive many questions about interpreting OSHA regulations and preparation for an unannounced OSHA inspection. As OSHA regulations are considered horizontal standards (regulations that can apply to many different occupations) it can be a bit confusing on what applies to the logging and wood manufacturing industries.

To assist our Policyholders the Mutual offers what is called a “Mock” OSHA inspection. Where we visit your job site or workplace to provide assistance in compliance of OSHA regulations. It goes much further than just an inspection and includes any training requirements that your employees may require. We can review and/or develop your Company Safety Programs to ensure you are up-dated with the latest OSHA requirements.

To provide our Policyholders with some idea on what OSHA places its focus on during a worksite or workplace inspection; here is their order of priority:

- Imminent danger situations—hazards that could cause death or serious physical harm receive top priority. Compliance officers will ask employers to correct these hazards immediately or remove endangered employees.
- Severe injuries and illnesses—employers must report:
 - All work-related fatalities within 8 hours.
 - Inpatient hospitalizations, amputations, or losses of eye within 24 hours.
- Worker Complaints—allegations of hazards or violations.
- Targeted inspections—inspections aimed at your company or industry.
- Follow-up inspections—checks for violations cited during previous inspections.

If an OSHA compliance officer visits your job location they should provide you with their credentials, which include both a photograph and a serial number. They should explain why OSHA selected your workplace for inspection and describe the scope of the inspection. You can accompany the compliance officer or select a representative to accompany them during the inspection. It is not unusual for compliance officers to consult with your employees during an inspection. Thus, keeping your employees up-dated on OSHA requirements is a good idea.

The walk-through inspection consists of identifying hazards that could lead to employee injury or illness. The compliance officer will also review worksite injury (OSHA 300 Logs) and illness records and the posting of the official OSHA poster. They may point out some apparent violations that can be corrected immediately. While the law requires these hazards to be cited, prompt correction could negate a fine for the violation.

When a compliance officer finds violations or serious hazards, OSHA may issue citations and fines. OSHA must issue a citation and proposed penalty within six months. Citations describe OSHA requirements allegedly violated, list any proposed penalties and give a deadline for correction. Violations are categorized as willful, serious, other-than-serious, failure to abate, and repeated. In settling a penalty, OSHA has a policy of reducing penalties for small employers and those acting in good faith. For serious violations, OSHA may also reduce the proposed penalty based on the gravity of the alleged violation.

If you need assistance in “Preparing for an OSHA Inspection” please contact our FMIC Safety Trainer, Jim McCraney (704-301-2919) or call our Raleigh office (1-800-849-7788).

New Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy... (from page 1)

If you have a driver(s), you must have a company program to include drug and alcohol testing. It can be one of the following:

- Produce and administer your own company program with quarterly random testing selections.
- Use a third-party vendor to administer your written and testing program.
- For accounts with small numbers of drivers, you can enroll your driver(s) in a consortium that comply with the FMCSA requirements for drug and alcohol testing.

Beginning January 1, 2019, your program must be available for your FMIC field representative to review and verify the following items during their visit:

- A written program complying with the guidelines to include testing procedures, disciplinary actions, and driver safety rules signed by each driver.
- A list of all current drivers and their current motor vehicle report (MVR) for each driver.
- If you use a third-party vendor, the rep will need a document that shows all drivers are enrolled through them on your behalf.

Guidelines for not having the required programs:

- If you do not comply with the guidelines at the time of the field representative visit, we will give you a 30-day notice to comply with our guidelines and a follow-up visit will be completed.
- After that 30 days, if you do not comply, then a 30-day cancellation notice will be issued.
- If during the cancellation period you complete the requirements before the deadline, then we will reinstate coverage.

FMIC provides an Employer Checklist Book as an example for your company’s safety policy and program. We also have a third-party vendor list for vendors that provide complete turn key services or have a group consortium for small numbers of drivers. Please contact your field representatives for assistance.

No one should be injured or die because of the carelessness of a driver who chose to use illegal drugs or alcohol. Please help us make the roadways safer for your drivers, your employees, and all of our families and friends.

Sincerely,

Keith S. Biggs

President, Forestry Mutual Insurance Company



(center) Larry and Palmer Dugger (white shirt) were honored at the Virginia Loggers Association Annual Meeting as Lawrence P. Dugger Logging, LLC was named FMIC’s Virginia Logger of the Year. Forestry Mutual’s Greg Plumley (right) presented the award. Palmer’s wife Nicole Dugger and their children joined in the celebration.

Plan Your Escape to Get Out of Dodge...(from page 2)

The escape plan can be aided by using a controlled-release back-cut. This back-cut keeps the stem from moving until the timber-cutter releases it. The controlled-release back-cut gives the sawyer more time to retreat from the falling tree or Get Out of Dodge! In the next issue we will discuss the two types of back-cuts.

Now we are going to change gears and talk about chainsaw safety features. This year we have received claims caused by the lack of saw safety features, or the safety features not being used. There are three chainsaw safety features that must be present:

- **Chain brake:** The chain brake on a chainsaw can be compared to a safety on a firearm. A properly working chain brake can greatly reduce the risk of laceration caused by a kick-back. The chain brake must be engaged before starting the saw. The chain brake must be engaged if taking more than two steps while the saw is running. A missing or non-functioning chain brake is considered a serious safety violation.
- **Throttle Inter-Lock:** The throttle inter-lock is the device that keeps the throttle from being engaged without a good grip on the saw. The throttle can't be squeezed until the inter-lock is depressed. Regular inspection is recommended to make sure this safety feature is in working order. Again, it is a safety violation if the inter-lock is missing or not functioning properly.
- **Chain Catch-Peg:** The purpose of the chain catch-peg is to keep a broken or derailed chain from striking the sawyer. Catch-pegs vary from the different manufactures, all must be checked to comply. If a catch-peg or any other safety feature is missing or broke, the saw must be placed out of service.

Please take the time to ensure that every saw has the three safety features and each safety feature is functioning properly. We experienced some claims this past year that could have been prevented if a simple safety inspection was done on the chain saw before being put into use. As always, if we can help you in anyway with your safety program, please call! Be safe, Look Up! ●

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK...

Through the first three quarters of 2018, Forestry Mutual recorded its least amount of claims since 2013. I want to thank our policyholders for this achievement. Their diligence and attention to safety programs have contributed to this milestone.

Even though the total number of claims is down, the total number of lost time claims is still attributing to about 47% of the claims reported. Every year, the average cost of a claim continues to grow due to the increasing medical costs.

We are pleased to announce that the total number of trucking claims is less than we have experience in previous years. Truck driver claims still contributed to 27% of all of our loss claims.

In the southern United States, one thing we all know is that we are the wood basket of the world. With that amount of harvests on an annual basis, there naturally is a great deal of exposure for trucking accidents.

Increasing our footprint once again, Forestry Mutual has now expanded into Mississippi during the third quarter of 2018. We are excited about adding another southern state to our service area. We look forward to providing exceptional service to our new Mississippi policyholders.

For years now, I have come to call the days between Thanksgiving to New Year's Day as the Silly Season. The loss of focus during the holidays can bring distractions for employees. Please make sure your employees stay focused on their jobs during the holiday season.



Keith Biggs

Forestry Mutual was honored this year by receiving the Lifetime Partnership Award from the North Carolina Forestry Association in October during the association's annual meeting. The award recognized a partnership that started back in 1971. We thank all of our policyholders that have been with us during this journey.

Similarly, Forestry Mutual recognized two managers as they reached milestones in their employment with Forestry Mutual. Coy Baker was recognized for 30 years and J.J. Lemire was recognized for 20 years of excellent service to the employees and policyholders.

Forestry Mutual is always looking for ways that we can better serve you the policyholder. Should you have any suggestions please feel free to contact me or one of our staff. I hope all of you have a great holiday season and thanks for your business.

Sincerely,

Keith S. Biggs

UPDATE ON TEAM SAFE TRUCKING PROGRAM



The forest products industry has a unique opportunity to develop and provide "common sense" commercial truck driver training programs by using TEAM Safe Trucking training modules and templates.

The programs will improve log truck driver safety awareness and result in a better driver performance. Over time, this improved performance should prove to reduce truck insurance costs.

You can find these training modules online at www.teamsafetrucking.com.

MODULE ONE includes: Introduction to Team Safe Trucking, Driver Qualification, Driver Condition, Loading and Unloading and Vehicle Condition.

MODULE TWO includes: Rollovers, Distracted Driving, Speeding and Clearances.

For more information about Team Safe Trucking, please contact: Miranda Gowell, TST Special Projects Manager at (877) 399-7757 or Miranda.gowell@teamsafetrucking.com. ■



THE SAWSHOP

by Bryan Wagner
Chainsaw Trainer for
Forestry Mutual

THE BACKCUT!

Without a doubt, the timber-cutter has the most dangerous job in the logging woods. The timber-cutter is exposed to risk on many different fronts. Every aspect of manual felling has risk involved with it. Each article previously presented has broken the felling process down into segments. Each part of the felling process has its own risk factors. With that said, we are going to review the Five Part Felling Plan, which is the best risk management tool available to the timber-cutter. This plan isn't new; it has been around for over thirty years. A brief refresher is good for awareness.



Bryan Wagner demonstrates the back-cut as part of his timber felling class.

1. Check for all over-head hazards. What's up there that could hurt me? Where's your body at?
2. Check for side-lean. Side-lean determines the good side and bad side of the tree. Limit your exposure to the weighted or bad side of the tree, stay on the good side. Where's your body at?
3. ESCAPE! The escape route is a 45-degree path away from the falling tree. The escape distance should be as far as possible, with your "eyes to the sky". Get Out of Dodge!
4. Hinge thickness. The basic rule of thumb is one-tenth the DBH of the tree. Tree species and other situations may affect the "called for" thickness of the hinge. The hinge is the steering wheel during the felling process and the tree goes where the hinge tells it too. The hinge is a huge safety factor, should the tree strike another object on the way to the ground; the hinge helps to prevent rebound. Proper hinge wood can't exist with a by-passed notch. Both cuts of the felling notch must meet. One purpose of the notch is to create the hinge length. The hinge length should be at least 80% of the diameter of the tree.
5. Number 5 is what I will discuss - THE BACK-CUT PLAN. This must be important, because he has it in bold print! The back-cut is the final felling cut. There are two very different ways to make the final cut, both are "legal", one is exceptionally safer.

The conventional back-cut was most likely the method most of us were taught when we were younger. After the tree is properly face-notched, the sawyer starts the felling cut from the back of the tree, cutting to his desired hinge thickness. This sounds relatively easy, but there are a lot of things happening as this type of cut is being used. If the tree has front-lean,

(continued on page 4)

AGENCY CORNER

by Eddie Campbell, Forestry Mutual

PLANNING BEFORE AN AUTO CLAIM IS IMPORTANT

No one wants to anticipate having an auto claim, but unfortunately, they happen. Your actions when an accident does occur has a big effect on the whole claims process. It is stressful enough at the time of the accident and difficult to remember what to do. Here are several steps to consider having in place beforehand.

The first item is to contact law enforcement immediately and let them know of any injuries and your location. Also, contact your supervisor to report the accident as soon as possible.

Once law enforcement arrives, be polite, answer questions, but do not accept responsibility or offer an opinion as to the cause of the accident. If you have any telematics or camera footage, do not show the police at the time of the accident as this is your private information and can be used against you if litigation later arises.

When possible, take pictures of the scene and any damage to vehicles involved. As the accident is investigated, make sure you receive the other party's name, phone number and insurance information. An accident report may not be available at the scene. Get the information on how to obtain the report afterwards. Do not leave the scene until excused by law enforcement.

If your vehicle is not drivable because of the damage, consider the following.

Most law enforcement will work with you on the removal if you ask them. If possible, contact a tow company you know as opposed to those called by law enforcement.

In either case, see if the vehicle can be towed to your home or shop as opposed to a storage lot. We've seen cases where a vehicle is towed right by an insured's shop going to the storage lot and storage fees can be costly.

If a loaded tractor trailer is involved and the load was lost on the road, see if you can do the cleanup yourself. One case we saw, the truck owner's logging site was a few miles away and he could have easily done the cleanup himself. Cleanup fees can be costly as well.

Make sure to report all accidents to your agent or insurance provider immediately, even if you plan to pay out of pocket. They can investigate if deemed necessary and assist with any problems that may arise from the claim. By taking these few steps at the time of an accident, you can reduce frustration from a claim and get matters settled more effectively. ■



As cold weather arrives, policyholders are encouraged to take the time to prepare their employees with information and tools to stay warm and safe on the job.

COLD WEATHER WORK ENVIRONMENT

by Jim McCraney, Forestry Mutual

Employees working in logging, sawmill, and some manufacturing facilities should be aware of the physical hazards caused by cold working environments. Employees should also be familiar with treatment methods for cold-related disorders and understand how to protect against cold-weather hazards. Employers are urged to taking the time to train their employees on protecting themselves while working in cold weather environments.

There are basically four factors that contribute to cold stress: cold temperature, high or cold wind, dampness and cold water. These factors, alone or in combination, draw heat away from the body. The wind chill factor can intensify the effects of cold stress. Wind chill is a combination of temperature and velocity and is a crucial factor to determine the risk of cold injury. For instance, if the actual air temperature 35° F and wind speed 15 mph, this combination causes the wind chill factor is 25° F which is below the freezing temperature of 32° F.

When body temperature drops, even a few degrees below its normal temperature of 98.6° F, the body uses its defense mechanisms to help maintain its core temperature. Continuous exposure to cold will cause a person to shiver, which generates heat by speeding up the body's metabolic rate. The body will also begin to shift blood flow away from the extremities (hands, feet, arms and legs) and outer skin to the core (chest and abdomen). This allows exposed skin and extremities to cool rapidly and increases the risk of hypothermia.

Hypothermia results when the body is unable to produce enough heat to replace the heat lost to the environment. Symptoms normally begin when the body temperature drops below 95° F. The first symptoms are shivering and foot stomping, which helps generate heat. The individual may fall into a state of dazed consciousness, failing to complete even simple motor functions. The victim's speech becomes slurred and his or her behavior may become irrational. The person becomes very sleepy or unconscious and death may occur at this stage.

What can be done for a person suffering from hypothermia?

- Call 911 immediately in an emergency; otherwise seek medical assistance as soon as possible. Move the person to a warm, dry area. Remove wet clothes and replace with dry clothes, cover the body with layers of blankets.

If medical help is more than 30 minutes away:

- Place warm items (hot packs, warm bottles) in armpits, sides of chest, and groin. Call 911.

If a person is not breathing or has no pulse:

- Call 911 for emergency medical assistance immediately. Check for signs of breathing and for a pulse. If the person is not breathing and does not have a pulse, provide 30 chest compressions. Recheck for breathing and pulse.

If the person is still not breathing and has no pulse, provide 30 additional chest compressions followed by two rescue breaths (CPR at this point) until the medical professionals arrive. Reassess patient's physical status periodically.

Please take time now to make sure your employees are informed on working in cold environments and the precautions they should take to be safe. ■



SAFETY ALERT

by J.J. Lemire
Director of Loss Control
for Forestry Mutual

ANNUAL REMINDERS

Claims Reporting

The following information is to assist policyholders to meet their obligation for properly reporting your injuries to Forestry Mutual.

1. All policyholders are required to notify the Mutual of any employee accident for which a doctor's visit is required within five days of the date on which the policyholder (or any of its supervisory personnel) is first made aware of the injury. Should the policyholder fail to provide such notice, the Mutual may deny coverage for the unreported claim and may seek reimbursement by the policyholder for any payments made by the Mutual as the result of the unreported claim.
2. Any employee that is injured and is treated at a hospital emergency room must have a drug and alcohol screen completed by the treating facility. It is the policyholder's responsibility to order the drug and alcohol screen from the treating facility. If the policyholder cannot obtain a drug and alcohol screen, you must at the time of treatment immediately contact the Mutual's claims department (800-849-7788) and request their intervention. If in any case the employer fails to fulfill this requirement the Mutual may deny coverage of the claim.
 - a. Call 1-800-849-7788 to report claims promptly or use the state appropriate forms on our website. www.forestrymutual.com Click on the claims box on the left side.
 - b. If you feel a claim is not legitimate, report your suspicions as soon as possible.
 - c. If you have any questions regarding the status of a claim, reporting a claim, completing a form or the validity of a claim, please contact the claims department immediately.
3. It is imperative that the policyholder immediately notifies the claims department when a claimant returns to work. Also, any change that you feel may affect the claimant's status, such as termination of employment, knowledge of another job, etc., should be reported immediately.

Techniques to Reduce Claims Costs

The best way to control the cost of both your minor or major compensation claim is to avoid the emergency room when possible. We encourage all policyholders to establish themselves with a local general practitioner and orthopedic group with the understanding that when feasible, all injured employees will be directed to one of these doctors first as opposed to the emergency room.

OSHA Record Keeping Requirements

OSHA requires employers to post a summary of the total number of job-related injuries and illnesses that occurred during the previous calendar year. Summaries must be posted from February 1 to April 30, 2019. However, employers need only post the Summary (OSHA Form 300A), not the OSHA 300 Log. If you had no recordable injuries or illnesses in 2018, you still must post the form with zeros on the total line.

In order for employees to view the OSHA 300A Summary, post it in a common area such as a break room or on a bulletin board or wherever you post other important notices to employees.

Also, a reminder that employers with 10 or fewer employees, and employers in certain industry groups, are normally exempt from federal OSHA injury and illness record keeping and posting requirements. ■

The Back-cut...(from page 2)

tensioned wood is present on the back side of the tree. When tensioned wood is cut, you get movement, you are “chasing” or racing the tree. As mentioned earlier, this technique is legal, but has higher risk associated with it. The risk comes in the form of the tree’s movement and the close proximity of the timber-cutter to the moving tree. Escape time is limited due to the tree’s movement during the back-cut process. Often the sawyer must race or chase the tree down to prevent fiber pull or splitting of the butt log.

THE CONTROLLED-RELEASE BACK-CUT

A much safer and efficient back-cut is the controlled release method. Its title tells the story, the timber-cutter has control of the tree until he wants the tree to move. This back-cut is made by boring the saw perpendicular behind a properly notched tree. The timber-cutter actually forms the hinge and its thickness at this point. When the hinge thickness is correct, the sawyer cuts to the back of the tree. During this whole process, the tree hasn’t moved because compressed wood has been cut. The remaining wood on the back of the tree is referred to as the “trigger”. The trigger is basically the tension wood of the tree. When the trigger is cut, the tension is released and tree is allowed to fall.

The safety benefits of this back-cut are huge. The efficiency and productivity of this method make it a whole package. The controlled release back-cut is being sold to fight a nation-wide trend. Ninety-some percent of manual felling deaths take place within eight feet from the stump. By using the controlled release back-cut the timber-cutter gains ample time to escape from the falling tree.

Log quality is enhanced by using a controlled release, there is no fiber left to split or pull, it has been cut while working to the back of the tree. With the safety and productivity issues considered the controlled release back-cut is the way to go.

As stated earlier, the risk factors involved with the manual felling process are many. Using good decisions coupled with proper techniques can reduce risk levels. Using the five-part felling plan and cutting with a controlled release drastically reduces the risk of injury. Let’s go home, the same way we started, SAFE! ■

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