

Idaho Logging Safety Newsletter

Volume 35 Number 5

August 2025



Published quarterly in the interest of logging safety by the
Idaho Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses' Logging Safety Program

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This picture shows Mathew Carney and his son Kerrick. Those who attended this year's First Aid Class heard Mathew's story about being hit by a falling tree and helping direct his own rescue. Thank you for sharing your story, Mathew.

Dash Cams

By: Wayne Lynn

A few years ago, an accident occurred involving a four-wheeler that crashed into a log truck on a logging road. Yes, that is how it happened. The four-wheeler hit the log truck. The four-wheeler operator was driving fast and irresponsibly, despite proper signage warning of logging operations and truck traffic. With no CB, he had no idea the distance was quickly closing with a log truck. Fortunately, the truck driver was driving defensively, knowing that his CB may not warn him of all the potential dangers ahead. The two suddenly met in a curve. The driver pulled his truck as far over as possible to avoid the four-wheeler and stopped his vehicle.

Unfortunately, the four-wheeler operator could not stop and hit the truck. Although shaken and angry, the truck driver offered assistance to the four-wheeler operator, who said he would be fine, though his ride was damaged. After offering assistance, the truck driver used his cell phone and took pictures of the scene, and then the two parted ways.

The truck driver informed his employer of the accident and shared the pictures he had taken. The man on the four-wheeler spoke to some friends later and concluded that the accident must have been the truck driver's fault. After all, how does a four-wheeler crash into a log truck? It should be the other way around, right? Later, the logging contractor was surprised by a visit to his shop by a deputy from the Sheriff's Department. The deputy received a complaint that the truck ran into the four-wheeler. The contractor grabbed his cell phone, which included pictures of the accident, and showed them to the deputy. The four-wheeler operator was at fault, not the truck driver. The deputy said he could see what happened and did not find the truck driver at fault. Like they say, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Although the pictures were taken with a phone and not a dash camera, dash cameras are becoming more popular today for this very reason. The inclination is to blame the truck driver when there is an accident, and they are often not at fault. Dash cams provide excellent documentation in the event of an accident. Pictures are great, video is even better. Some insurance providers are now offering premium discounts to companies or drivers who use them because of this. Logging roads, rural highways, and cities are full of other drivers that present hazards to truck drivers. Even the most cautious driver may find themselves involved in an accident where they are not at fault.

Several options are available, and costs vary. Some of the simplest and most economical versions are forward-looking and can be connected to a smartphone. They will save an image if an event occurs, such as an accident, when someone pulls out in front of you, or when a four-wheeler collides with you when you are stopped in the ditch. This type may be well-suited for an owner operator or a company with a small number of trucks. Some dash cameras can be purchased for \$200.00 or less. More elaborate systems include a GPS tracker, a camera, and a monitor to track the truck's diagnostics. The carrier charges a fee for this service. Contractors I have spoken with consider the cost reasonable. The most common cameras associated with these systems provide forward and rear-facing views. The rear-facing view monitors the driver, not the back of the truck. Many employees are uncomfortable with the rear-facing view because they feel it invades their privacy. This feature can be turned off if it causes problems with employees. There are options for side and rear views of the truck. These views require additional cameras due to the size of vehicles. A camera on the back of the truck may be a good idea, but road spray, dust, etc., may cover the lens, making the camera ineffective. Some of these features are more beneficial to a company with more trucks. Regardless of company size, these devices may prove invaluable to you. Everyone I know who uses dash cams considers them essential now. If you aren't currently using one, they are worth considering. Whether you are an owner/operator or run a fleet of trucks, a dash cam may prove to be helpful in an accident.

Staying Focused

By: Kelly Waalkens

I visited with a truck driver and a loader operator a few weeks ago. We were talking about how fast things can go wrong. They both chuckled as the loader operator pointed at the truck driver, and the story unfolded. A few days prior, he had just turned his stake extensions as he had done hundreds of times before and stepped off the trailer tire to the loader. This time, he missed the handle on the loader and proceeded to fall. He said “How much metal you can encounter on the way down is amazing.” Unfortunately, the ground where he landed was also very rocky. Listening to his story and looking at where this incident occurred, my first thoughts were that this is a very tough individual. My second thought was that this young man was very fortunate. It's a good thing he wasn't my age and in my physical condition. He had several bruises, a couple of minor cuts, and lost a little blood, but it could have been so much worse. The loader operator who witnessed the fall said it was very concerning at first. But after a quick head-to-toe check and applying a couple of bandages, he was as good as new. It doesn't matter what job you do in the logging industry; losing focus for just a second can cost you dearly. Get plenty of rest, take care of yourself, and discuss the hazards. Say something if you notice someone's head isn't in the game. The consequences of not staying focused can all too often be permanent.

Goodness Gracious, Great Balls of Fire

By: Steve Gibson

Yes, those are the famous lyrics of the late, great Jerry Lee Lewis in the late 50's, but not what you want to see when there's a fire in or under a machine in the woods or out in the shop. Luckily, if purchased ahead of time and kept readily available for use, a newer method of putting out a fire may help. It comes in the shape of a ball with a hard plastic outer shell that, after making contact with a flame, causes the chemicals inside to disperse, aiding in putting out the fire. Here are a few features to consider, (which I found online) but please do your research to learn more about how a newer device like this may help to save a very expensive machine with minimal investment upfront.

This tool is considered a revolutionary self-activating device designed to extinguish fires. A lightweight shell is made from rigid plastic foam and is abrasion-resistant, with a rapid activation time and flame contact of only 3 to 5 seconds. The 6-inch diameter ball with a dry powder fire extinguisher offers 60 square feet of coverage, extinguishes type A fires involving solid materials such as wood, paper, or textiles, type B fires involving flammable liquids such as petroleum, diesel, or oils and gases, and type C fires involving live electrical apparatus. The device is light and portable at 2.86 lbs, and provides autonomous 24/7 fire prevention when mounted in its bracket. It is also non-toxic and environmentally friendly, with a 7 To 10 year life span.

Here are a few tips on using one found online: Throw the ball into the fire or install it in a fire-prone location. If a fire occurs, the fire extinguisher ball, weighing under 5 lbs, can be carried easily for fast response. When thrown into or rolled into a fire, it will explode and make noise to catch everyone's attention nearby. If a flame touches it for 3-5 seconds, the ball will potentially extinguish the fire effectively and rapidly.

Another option to complement your ability to put out a fire is the newer handheld fire extinguishers that have a longer use life and don't require ongoing certifications. Once a common dry chemical fire extinguisher has

been used, it cannot be used again without being professionally serviced. The powder inside can clump and clog the nozzle, making it unusable and useless for the next fire.

A manufacturer makes another fire extinguisher named STOP-FYRE that allows for multiple uses with value technology and a clean agent. It's a clean agent fire extinguisher made of a proprietary blend of fire suppression gases. Unlike dry-chemical fire extinguishers, it doesn't need a direct shot to put out a fire. It expands to reach the fire, even if you can't, and it's an option for all Class A, B, C, and K fires.

As a reminder, the Idaho minimum safety standards and practices for logging require that every vehicle used for transporting employees must be equipped with a fire extinguisher with at least a 4 BC rating. This rating is the equivalent of a 5 lb extinguisher capable of putting out flammable liquids and electrical fires. Cleaning machines consistently can help reduce machine fires, including using handheld gas blowers used in landscaping to remove small flammable debris from confined areas, as well as dust particles from air filters.

How Are We Doing This Year?

By: Stan Leach

That's a question we get all the time. You guys are always looking for safety meeting topics, and the hazards you are exposed to are fairly similar across the industry. The intent here is not to embarrass anybody, but to learn from our mistakes and hopefully avoid repeating them. To keep doing the same thing and expecting a different result is the definition of insanity.

Here is a scorecard of accidents and problems we have seen in the woods this season. We had a fatality, but it was determined to be a medical issue and not an accident. There was an operator who suffered significant injuries when he fell off a side-entry cab loader. Always use three points of contact when moving in or out of any machine. We had a mechanic cut while working on a dangle head processor. They were trying to find a leak, and he was cut by the chain when the bar retracted. Always de-energize a machine if you must put a body part into a point of operation. A sawyer was cut while limbing a tree. He clipped a loaded vine maple that struck him in the face, requiring stitches. Always think about what could happen when cutting and try to be in a position where you can't be hit. We have had a couple of broken reaches. We also had one machine fire.

We have had incidents where machines have tipped over; thankfully, we have not seen injuries from these. We are running our machines on ever steeper ground. The steeper the ground, the less of a margin for error. If the ground is covered with slash and tops, it may hide from view, stumps and holes that can make the machine unstable. Always wear your seatbelt when operating on steep ground. If you tip over and aren't tied in to the seat, you can be thrown around the cab, causing serious injuries. The machines are supposed to have two points of ingress and egress. Be sure you can get out of either access point if needed.

There have been several reports from loader operators of truck drivers getting behind the cab guard while being loaded to paint the load or pull the bunk pin. Doing so places the driver in a position where a log can hit them. The loader operator is focused on getting you loaded safely and quickly. He has twenty more loads to get out today. It only takes a few seconds to paint or pull the pin; don't try to do that as he is swinging back for more logs. The timing rarely works out; you often end up with logs going over you or coming down right next to you. If you have much more than a bunk lay on, the operator may not be able to see you to know you are in harms way. Would you trade your life or suffer a serious injury to save a couple of seconds? I hope not. There is plenty of time to do these things when he is not actively loading you.

The last thing that has come up a few times in the previous couple of years is the helicopter landing zone. During the dry season, if you have to call for a helicopter, have somebody water down the landing area while

waiting for the ship to arrive. If the landing zone is too dusty, the aircraft can't land. When they try to set it down, it will push the dust into the motor, causing engine damage. If a crewmember is seriously hurt, everyone becomes anxious and wants to help. If you assign everybody a job, it will make the rescue go smoother and lessen everyone's anxiety because they have a task to focus on. One guy stays with the patient, one stays on the phone or radio with State Comm., one goes down the main road to meet the ambulance, and one goes to water down the landing zone. If you don't have that many guys on-site, do your best, and know that if the helicopter can't land, things get a lot more complicated. Please be safe out there! There isn't any tree out there worth you getting hurt or killed over.

What Can I Do?

By: Stan Leach

A question came up the other day during a conversation with a logging contractor. He was asking what he could do if an employee refuses to get checked out after an accident. I reached out to A.L.E., the workers' comp. insurance company, to be sure I got the correct answer. They said that the employer has the right to direct initial treatment. If an employee refuses, the employee risks the claim being denied due to the lack of medical evidence of an injury. His other suggestion is for an employer to make it part of the employment procedures manual. That way, an employee must read and acknowledge that he understands that it is part of an accident follow-up process. There are significant potential risks to the employee and employer if a medical check is not done following an accident. The extent or severity of injuries may not be readily apparent to the untrained eye. If the injured party has internal bleeding or a brain bleed, they may feel okay to start with, but if they don't get that diagnosed, it can lead to a stroke or internal complications. For the employer, it can lead to significantly higher costs. An injury that could have been treated quickly initially can cost a lot more a few hours or days later.

That scenario happened to me years ago when I had my own company. One of the sawyers was working in a live tree patch with heavy brush. The sawyer was fighting through the brush to get to the next tree. He ended up running his arm down the saw chain. He had three minor cuts in his skin that I thought needed stitches. He wasn't bleeding much, however. He didn't want to go to the doctor, saying his mother-in-law was a nurse and she could bandage him up. Against my better judgment, I let him go home. That evening, when the nurse got home, she took a look at it and said he needed stitches, and they went to the emergency room at the local hospital. The bill for treatment at the emergency room was four times what it would have cost had I taken him in to the clinic during business hours when it first happened. I understand everyone is concerned about an accident showing up on their comp insurance and potentially raising their rates. If it turns out to be a medical-only claim with no lost time, it is discounted 70% in your experience mod calculation. If minor treatment is given or major issues are diagnosed and quickly treated, it will cost you much less in the long run.

I have heard several stories over the years about people who fell and hit their head or were in a car wreck and didn't get checked by a doctor. Some of these people suffered strokes or passed away from undiagnosed injuries. Play it safe. If you have had an accident and aren't sure about the extent of the injuries, have the employee checked by a doctor; you will both be glad you did. Every injury or accident should be reported to your workers' comp. insurance company.

The Joys and Perils of August

By: Stan Leach

By the time you get to read this, we will be knee deep into August, that time of year when the dust hangs in the air, and smoke from the fires drifts into every valley. It's hot almost every day, stressing the machines and operators. You have been working steadily since May and are in the groove. The problem is, as human beings, we tend to get lulled into complacency when things become repetitive and are going smoothly. The same hazards exist; we start not seeing or taking them seriously. With that in mind, I challenge you to start each day with this reminder- My job is to go home uninjured every day. You can still produce lots of quality logs while being safe. We have already had several injuries this summer, where people rushed to get things done and neglected to use proper procedures or the correct PPE. This neglect resulted in them getting hurt and taking several days off to recover. Was it worth the few seconds of saved time? They all said no.

If you do have an accident, there are reporting requirements. Please call your local logging safety guy and let him know. He can help you through the process. The OSHA rules require reporting of any fatality within eight hours. The number to call is in the written safety plan that your company is required to have. For non-fatal injuries that include an amputation of any body part, the loss of an eye, or injuries that result in a patient being admitted to a hospital overnight, those require a report to OSHA within twenty hours. If the patient is treated and released, that is not an OSHA reportable accident.

Now for the joys. The huckleberries are large and plentiful this year, and the cutthroat will eagerly rise to take almost any fly that looks like a grasshopper. If you keep yourself safe, you can go out and enjoy both of these delights that are part of August in Idaho. Be safe out there!



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Idaho Logging Safety News

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The Idaho Logging Safety News

Is published quarterly by the
Idaho Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses.

It is mailed to all logging companies in Idaho.

We welcome your comments and suggestions.

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