

# Idaho Logging Safety Newsletter

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Brad Little, Governor

Russell S. Barron, Administrator

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## Powerline Safety

By Stan Leach

We experienced a severe windstorm in Northern Idaho this past December. Millions of feet of timber blew down, and there was significant flooding in the St. Joe and Coeur d'Alene River drainages. As always, you loggers were out there trying to get logs to the mill, often having to saw your way out just to get home. I didn't hear of any major injuries from that process, though there were several close calls with trees coming down while crews were bucking logs already on the ground. A few machines and trucks were struck, but luckily there was no significant damage.

However, I saw a couple of other incidents that had the potential to go horribly wrong. Trees continued to fall for days after the main wind event, and some of them landed across powerlines along the roads. On two separate occasions, I came across situations where people had just finished sawing trees out of the roadway while those trees were still draped across adjacent powerlines. No one appeared to be hurt, but there was no one from the power company in sight. I wondered if the power was off or if these guys just got lucky.

Just because a line is on the ground and isn't sparking does **not** mean the power is off. The tree itself can be energized, as can the ground around it, often with no visual indication at all. If you start sawing that tree, you could create a pathway for the electricity to go through your body with disastrous results.

In these situations, the temptation is to help. You have a saw, it's just one tree, and you want to get traffic moving. But that decision could be the last thing you ever do. Unless you have direct confirmation from the utility company that the power is off, stay back. Yes, that means you might be sitting there for a while. You may even need to take the long way around. Either option is better than being killed while trying to help.

Years ago, due to a mistake on my part, I was electrocuted. To put it mildly, I didn't enjoy it. I still have the scars and physical impairment from that event, and I'm lucky to be alive. If you find yourself facing a situation involving electricity, please make the right choice: contact the power company and stay clear until the lines are confirmed safe. We are lucky to have professionals from Avista and Clearwater Power who worked day and night to get the lights back on before Christmas; please thank them for their effort.

# Required Emergency Communication for Idaho Logging

By Steve Gibson

Effective emergency communication is critical when someone is injured and needs immediate help. Emergency services often refer to the “Golden Hour.” This is the principle that a patient with traumatic injuries has a much higher chance of survival if they can be transported to a medical facility within one hour of the accident.

What does that mean for you and your crew? It means that as an Idaho logger, you must ensure everyone is fully aware of the Logging Emergency Plan (also known as the Company Emergency Rescue Plan) ahead of time. Simply knowing that the plan is tucked behind the sun visor of a truck isn't enough. Practicing an emergency scenario is the best way to make sure things go smoothly when the pressure is on.

After an accident occurs, two critical things must happen simultaneously:

1. **First Aid:** The victim will likely require immediate care. You must know where the first aid kits are and how to use the items inside. If the victim cannot walk, you will need a backboard, two blankets, and straps. Ensure these four items are kept together in the same location on every job site. Practice getting a blanket under an injured person and securing the straps on the backboard correctly.
2. **Communication:** A second person needs to contact State Comm via radio or phone. Save their number in your contacts now: **State Comm - 208-846-7610**. Remember, we only dial 911 as a last resort. It is vital that your written Emergency Plan is complete, legible, and includes detailed, turn-by-turn driving directions with road names and specific mileage from the nearest town. Do not rely on "meeting the ambulance" somewhere on the road.

One of the best ways to reduce stress during an emergency is to pre-register your work site with State Comm. This means they already have your plan in their system, and you only need to confirm the location. This action significantly speeds up the arrival of medical help.

**Radio Protocol:** Practice what needs to be said. The "hailing language" is usually written inside the front cover of your Emergency Plan. When talking to State Comm on the radio:

1. Key the mic half a second before speaking.
2. State: “State Comm, this is [Company Name]. We have a logging emergency and need assistance/a helicopter.”
3. Provide your exact Latitude and Longitude.
4. Describe the injury and whether the person is conscious and breathing.
5. Provide your cell phone number and stay on the line.

Finally, prepare for the arrival of help. If a helicopter is coming, remember that a dusty landing zone can be unsafe; you may need to water it down or find an alternative spot. Send a crew member to the highway to escort the ambulance, using your truck's emergency flashers and standing visibly by the vehicle. Completing this plan on the first day of every new job could save your life or the life of a crew member.

# Secondary Exits

By Wayne Lynn

Machines are required to have a secondary egress—an "escape hatch"—to allow an operator to exit in an emergency if the primary door is blocked. It is vital to know where this exit is, how it operates, and, most importantly, if it works.

I recently spoke with a loader operator who decided to check his and found it was completely stuck. He had been running that machine for years and had never checked it until that day. After some WD-40, a few tools, and some elbow grease, he got it working properly. That was a "good catch." Being trapped in a machine that is on fire or being injured and alone is a nightmare scenario. Your escape hatch could save your life; make sure it opens today.

# The Squeaky Wheel

By Kelly Waalkens



Vandalism is one of the most senseless crimes there is. Inflicting damage on logging equipment or pulling out gates is ridiculous behavior that costs everyone money. The cost of repairing a gate and fixing a rutted road after someone destroys the lock is often more than \$10,000.

I recently spoke with a forester who was aware of six gates pulled out recently. I've lost count of how many road signs and mile markers have been stolen or destroyed. Some contractors have told me they've just become used to it, always keeping extra signs on hand. One contractor recently told me he had four signs stolen from one job and refused to replace them again.

While I wholeheartedly sympathize with that frustration, we cannot just let it go. Safety must remain at the forefront. If someone gets hurt on your job site and it is proven that you didn't take the required legal steps to protect the public and your employees (like posting signs), the courts are not likely to rule in your favor.

So, what can we do? The old saying goes: "The squeaky wheel gets the grease." Most of us just grumble and fix the damage ourselves. However, when vandalism occurs, you must report it to the local authorities. They cannot help if they don't know there is a problem. We might not see instant results, but we won't see results if we do nothing.

In one recent case, a grader was found six miles from where it was supposed to be, with signs missing and the gate damaged. Some landowners are now installing game cameras to monitor gates, and some contractors are adding Air Tags or similar tracking devices to their machines. We must look out for our equipment and each other.

# Communicate Effectively

By Wayne Lynn

A log truck driver recently shared a close call from last winter that could have been tragic. He was assisting another driver with taking chains off. He was on the passenger side, while the driver was on the other side of the cab. Because of how the chains were positioned, he had to crawl between the dual wheels to reach the connectors.

He told the driver he was crawling in and specifically said not to move the truck. Thinking the driver had heard him, he crawled in. Suddenly, he heard the air release as the driver let off the parking brake. The truck pulled forward seconds later. Fortunately, the helper cleared the wheels just in time, narrowly avoiding being crushed.

This is a textbook example of the need for effective communication. Just because you say something or give a hand signal doesn't mean you were heard, seen, or understood. Before walking across a landing, approaching a machine, or assisting a driver, ensure you have received a clear acknowledgment. Assumptions and miscommunications in this industry often have bad outcomes.



# 2026 LOGGER FIRST AID AND SAFETY TRAINING

*Offered by the Idaho State Logging Program and the Associated Logging Contractors of Idaho*

The following classes have been scheduled for the annual logging first aid and safety training. Please notify your entire crew (and please have them encourage their spouses) to attend this valuable class.

**OSHA and the State of Idaho Logging Safety regulations require that all workers in the woods participate in logger first aid and logging safety training every year.**

This class is also a required component of the Idaho Pro-Logger continuing education program.

Check in for morning classes starts at 7:30 a.m. The morning logging first aid and safety training starts at 8:00 a.m. and finishes at noon. Check in for the afternoon classes starts at 12:30 p.m., and the afternoon class starts at 1:00 p.m. and finishes at 5:00 p.m.

**If you arrive more than fifteen (15) minutes after class starts, you are welcome to stay but you will not be issued credit or a certificate of completion. Also, if you do not pick up your certificate at the end of class you will not be listed as having completed the class.**

*Pre-registration is necessary for attendance at the 2026 Logging First Aid and Safety Training Classes by contacting Jolene or Julie at the ALC Office.*

*You can either call 208-667-6473 or email [jolene@idahologgers.com](mailto:jolene@idahologgers.com) or [julie@idahologgers.com](mailto:julie@idahologgers.com) for a direct link for registration after January 2<sup>nd</sup>.*

*(Please see the next page for the schedule)*

## **U of I LEAP Update and LEAP Dates & Locations in 2026**

**LEAP Update** March 3 – Orofino

March 4 - CDA/Post Falls

March 5 - Bonners Ferry

**3 Day LEAP** April 14-16 – Moscow

April 21-23 - CDA

**Registration IS necessary for attending the LEAP and LEAP Update classes.**

**Registration information will be available at: [www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry/programs](http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry/programs)**

## 2026 LOGGER FIRST AID AND SAFETY TRAINING

*Offered by the Idaho State Logging Safety Program and the Associated Logging Contractors of Idaho*

LOCATION	DATE 2026	DAY	8:00 AM	1:00 PM	ADDRESS
Coeur d'Alene	March 10	Tuesday	AM	PM	ALC Office, 10589 S. Hwy 95
Princeton	March 11	Wednesday	AM	PM	Palouse River Community Center, 3487 Hwy 6
Orofino	March 12	Thursday	AM	PM	Best Western Lodge at Rivers Edge, 615 Main
St. Maries	March 17	Tuesday	AM	PM	Elks Lodge #1418, 628 Main
Pierce	March 18	Wednesday	AM Only		Pierce Community Center, 105 E. Carle St.
Grangeville	March 19	Thursday	AM Only		Elks Lodge #1825, 111 S. Meadow
New Meadows	March 24	Tuesday	AM	PM**	New Meadows Community Center, 102 N Commercial Ave
Lewiston	March 25	Wednesday	AM Only		Elks Lodge #896, 3444 Country Club Drive
Bonnars Ferry	March 26	Thursday	AM	PM	Kootenai River Inn, 7169 Plaza St.
Ponderay	March 31	Tuesday	AM	PM	Ponderay Event Center, 401 Bonner Way, Suite E
St. Maries	April 1	Wednesday	AM	PM	Elks Lodge, 628 Main
Moscow	April 2	Thursday	AM	PM**	Best Western Plus University Inn, 1516 Pullman Rd.
Emmett	April 7	Tuesday	AM Only		Emmett Nazarene Church, 1144 N. Washington
Orofino	April 14	Tuesday	AM	PM	Best Western Lodge at Rivers Edge, 615 Main
Kamiah*	April 15	Wednesday	AM Only		American Legion Post #75, 618 Main St
Coeur d'Alene	April 16	Thursday	AM	PM	ALC Office, 10589 S. Hwy 95
Idaho Falls	April 21	Tuesday	AM Only		IDL Office, 3563 E. Ririe Hwy
Salmon	April 22	Wednesday	AM Only		USFS Office, 1206 Challis St
					<b>*Class will be presented in Spanish ONLY</b>
					<b>**PM class tentative depending on registration numbers</b>
					12.11.25

## The Logging Safety Crew

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**Serving White Bird, Emmett,  
Soda Springs, and Salmon**

**Idaho Logging Safety News**

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## **The Idaho Logging Safety News**

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We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Call (208) 512-2354 or reach us online:  
[stan.leach@dopl.idaho.gov](mailto:stan.leach@dopl.idaho.gov)

**LOG SAFE FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY**

