

Northwest Forest Worker Safety Review



News, research, developments, and coming events compiled by the PACIFIC NORTHWEST AGRICULTURAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (PNASH) CENTER

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In this Issue

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|
| Forestry Workforce | 1 | New Articles | 4 |
| About the Numbers | 3 | Proposed Federal Budget Cuts | 4 |
| New Logging Specialists | 4 | Logging & Forestry Events | 5 |



The Changed Forestry Workforce: Issues, Opportunities, and the Future

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Important Issues of the Forestry Workforce

Some characterize forestry workforce circumstances by the four “Ds”: Difficult, Dirty, Dangerous, and Declining. Those of us involved in the industry today have the opportunity to determine whether or not these “Ds” will apply to the forestry workforce of the future.

Forestry work is dangerous. Logging is among the top three most deadly occupations along with fishing and mining, and often ranks as the most dangerous. Safety improvement efforts have made forestry work safer, and the increased use of machines provides better protection. Training is done on the job and safe work practices are difficult to transfer to new workers. Logging work was once well-compensated, especially in the West, but wages have been flat for years. Forestry Services work is often part-time or seasonal, and wages are lower than many industries. Work and living conditions may not be good and there have been documented abuses among subcontractor employers.

the
4Ds

- ⇒ Difficult
- ⇒ Dirty
- ⇒ Dangerous
- ⇒ Declining

PNASH changed forestry workforce continued...

The forestry workforce suffers from the same aging issues affecting most U.S. industries. In many states, over half the loggers are over age 45 and most logging contractors are over 50. The forestry services workers tend to be older managers, machine operators and supervisors, followed by a large proportion of young manual workers. It is difficult to find forest product truck drivers younger than 60 years of age.

With a recession and housing decline forestry has been hit hard, and mill closures have lowered logging and forestry services employment numbers. Logging is continuing a long trend of reduced harvests on federal lands and increased mechanization. Forestry Services numbers have increased over the same period but not enough to offset logging losses. Even now, employers are having trouble finding qualified logging and transportation workers. Skills needed for mechanized logging operations are in demand for mining, construction, and other competing industries. When the economic recovery commences, logging contractors anticipate difficulty in recruiting and retaining skilled workers.



Cedar block harvester

Economic improvements may repeat the 1981 forestry sector recession recovery where logging accidents surged dramatically. New entrants to the workforce and experienced workers suffered dramatic increases in accidents for four years as the firms expanded. Many are worried that there will be similar results if preemptive approaches are not taken.

Another issue for the logging workforce is the generational difference between older, experienced workers, and young prospective employees. The older generation understands and accepts working conditions with long hours of hard work in difficult circumstances. The new generation of workers, however, brings computer and technology skills to logging for high tech, computer-based machines. They also bring different work attitudes and expectations. Communication between generations of workers can be difficult and awkward.

The current generation possesses a vast reservoir of accumulated knowledge and skills which must be preserved and passed on to new forestry workers. Current training within firms is inadequate to accomplish this. Educational materials exist to help, but there are insufficient training schools, institutions, and organizations -even at the professional level.

Opportunities and prospects for the future

In 1992 the author organized the first international conference on "The Future of the Forestry Workforce" at Oregon State University. Some of the outcomes of that meeting are worth noting because they may have implications for the upcoming conference on "The Changed Forestry Workforce: Issues, Opportunities and the Future." (See page 4)

- Meeting results and papers were widely circulated to bring the issues to the attention of a larger audience in Europe and North America.
- Increased cooperation from researchers and organizations within North America and Europe.
- Establishment of the "Forestry Workforce Network" within the International Labor Organization that provided a forum for sharing information and projects. Europeans took more advantage of this organization than North Americans.
- The importance of the forestry services and logging workers were raised for consideration in the emerging sustainability and certification movements.

Twenty years later there are similar and greater potentials for outcomes of the upcoming conference. For example, we (the forestry sector leaders) could establish a "Forestry Workforce Network for North America" using modern social media and internet potentials. We could implement some of the research called for in the National Occupational Research Agenda, and demand that agencies monitor the forestry workforce numbers and conditions so progress can be assessed. We can try new training approaches within firms, and encourage and fund research efforts that would lead to workforce improvements. In addition, we can influence policy makers to consider the forestry workforce issues rather than ignore them. Finally, we can highlight successes on workforce issues and bring their results to others.

With the knowledge and commitment of interested leaders we can find new approaches, ideas, and energy to address issues of the forestry workforce, avoid looming problems, and build a future for the forestry workforce. Leaders have the burden of knowing first what others will figure out later. We simply need to begin!

Send your comments and interest to johngarland49@gmail.com or (541)563-3555.

** The views above are those of the author and may not reflect opinions of others.*

It's About the Numbers...

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What seems like a straightforward counting of the fatalities and accidents in logging and forestry services for 2010 turns out to be elusive. In this space we annually summarize injury and fatality statistics that are compiled by the Bureau of Labor as the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries and Survey of Occupational Injury and Illness by state (<http://www.bls.gov/iif/oshsum.htm>). However, when numbers of employees or incidents are too few in a state or when an agency makes a policy decision not to count them, this important data is not available to those who can use the information.

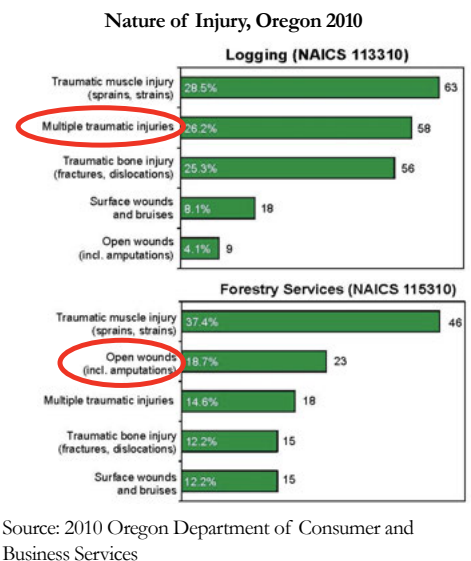
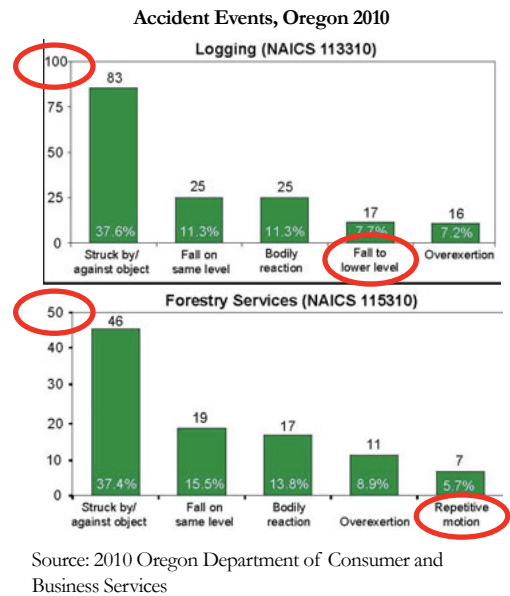
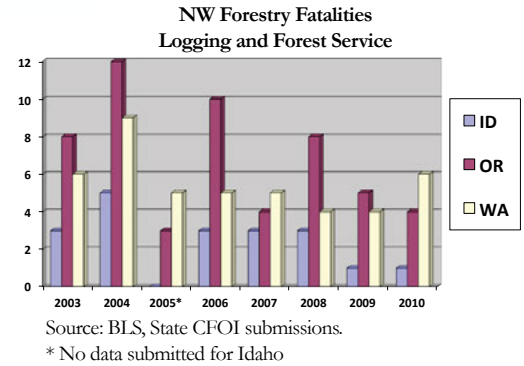
The states covered by PNASH (Alaska, Washington, Oregon and Idaho) vary in their approaches. All cover the category of agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting as NAICS code 11. Some states, however, only report that combined number for these quite different industries. Alaska reported five fatalities in the combined code but further information revealed four were in fishing; thus, the remaining fatality could have been in forestry, agriculture, or hunting. The combined rate for injuries per 100 employees was over 11.7 while the rate for serious injuries (requiring time away from work) was about half this at 5.5. Idaho had 9 fatalities in NAICS 11 but there were too few in some of the industries so the number was only reported for the combined agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting industries.

Washington had 20 fatalities in the combined category but reported five in logging and one in forestry services. The overall rate for logging injuries was 7.4 overall and 2.5 for serious injuries per 100 logging workers. Washington, which has significant logging activity, has been told by the Bureau of Labor to suspend collection of forestry data until 2014. Other northwest states report similar instructions.

Regionally, only Oregon is currently recording data for the logging industry (NAICS 113310) and forestry services (NAICS 115310) and keeping time series data. Some of this data is reported from the Workers Compensation System. In 2010 Oregon had 3 logging fatalities, zero forestry services fatalities, and a logging truck driver fatality listed in the warehousing and transportation industries sector. The logging injuries were at rates of 9.3 for overall and 6.4 for serious injuries. Forestry services likewise were 9.3 overall and 4.2 serious.

Oregon keeps time series data on the forestry sector that is quite useful to show trends in safety. Data can show how rates are affected by the number of workers employed; how measures change from 1990 to the present; most frequent accident or exposure events; the body parts most injured; the nature of the injuries; and even brief fatality descriptions (two pilots died in helicopter logging accident) www.actprod.cbs.state.or.us/portal/report_catalog.html.

Overall in the U.S., Logging is among the top three most dangerous industries and was second in 2010 with 70 fatalities. Forestry services (with three reported 3 fatalities) is not included in this total, but with such poor reporting, was likely underestimated. Because the total employment in logging is undercounted, the reported rate is likely higher than the true rate if it could ever be known. Much can be learned from safety statistics but only if data limits and validity are considered.



New Northwest Forestry and Logging Specialists

Tom Bozicevic

Tom is a Technical Specialist with Oregon OSHA's Standards and Technical Resources Section where he assists in planning, development, composition and promulgation of occupational safety and health standards. Tom works with Oregon employers in the manufacturing, construction, agriculture and logging industries by providing guidance and recommendations for creating and advancing safety and health in the workplace. Tom came to the Technical Section from Oregon OSHA's Enforcement Section where he worked as a Compliance Officer for 4 years. Prior to joining the agency, Tom managed EHS for 6 years in the private sector, and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety from Oregon State University in 2001.

Contact: tom.bozicevic@state.or.us

Larry Markee

Larry Markee is the Department of Labor and Industries' Logging & Wood Products Technical Safety Specialist. Larry spent his first 25 years of his work career in the timber industry. In 1997, Larry joined L&I as a logging inspector, ensuring worker safety. This April, Larry accepted the Logging & Wood Products Technical Safety Specialist position for the state and is looking toward the opportunity to work with the timber industry to heighten worker safety and especially reduce accidents.

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The Changed Forestry Workforce: Issues, Opportunities and the Future

This century has seen profound changes to the forestry workforce-- those professionals, owners, operators and workers who manage, tend, harvest, and transport forest resources. These changes put at risk not only the workers themselves but also forest landowners, forest industry, contractors, and government agencies charged with safety and health plus others concerned with environmental performance of forest workers. We all depend on a sustainable forestry workforce. No single organization is equipped to address the complex issues of recruiting, training, retention, and physical viability of the forestry workforce: what is everyone's job tends to be nobody's job.

To show your support for developing a network dedicated to addressing these crucial changes and opportunities or to obtain a copy of the "white paper" addressing these issues contact Dr. John J. Garland, PE at johngarland49@gmail.com.

New Articles

Oregon Forest Industry: A Comparison of Occupational Safety and Health Measures, 2010

By Rhonda Thompson

Department of Consumer and Business Services, Nov. 2011
www.cbs.state.or.us/imd/rasums/4840/10web/10_4840.pdf
A focused look at logging injuries, injury types and worker compensation claims in Oregon.

Workplace Deaths on Steady Decline: Even the Most Dangerous Jobs Become Safer

By Sara Verrelli, Research Analyst

Alaska Economic Trends, March 2012 p.10-15
labor.alaska.gov/research/trends/mar12art2.pdf
The author tackles a subject close to those who work in a dangerous profession. Verrelli documents that safety is getting better across the board.

Proposed Federal Budget Cuts in Logging & Forestry Safety

Budget cuts are a familiar necessity in recent years. One of the many programs on the table in federal budget negotiations has been worker safety. The President's 2013 budget proposes the elimination of two programs that provide important contributions to the health and productivity of our nation's workforce: The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Education and Research Centers (ERCs) and the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Program (AFF). Both are non-regulatory prevention programs.

The NIOSH AFF Program has champions in the Northwest and around the nation and has survived the last two years of budget cuts thanks to this show of support and the demonstrated need for continued work in reducing injuries and fatalities within our constituent industries. Consider that logging fatality rate exceeds the national average by 20 times. The death or disability of a family member or friend takes a tremendous toll that is not traditionally accounted for, yet accounting for the money is an important argument in budget debates - economists estimate that the burden of agricultural, forestry and fishing occupational injuries in the United States exceeds \$4 billion in direct and indirect costs.

More information on this federal budget issue is posted on the PNASH website at http://depts.washington.edu/pnash/2013budget_NIOSH.

2012-2013

Northwest Logging and Forestry Events

September 19 & 20 Central Oregon Occupational Health and Safety Conference
Eagle Crest Resort, Redmond, OR
http://www.oroSHA.org/conferences/2012/coc_flyer.pdf
(503) 378-3272

September 26-27 61st Annual Washington Governor's Industrial Safety and Health Conference
Spokane Convention Center, Spokane, WA
<http://www.wagovconf.org/>
(888) 451-2004

October 17 & 18 Southern Oregon Occupational Health and Safety Conference
Smullin Center, Medford, OR
http://www.oroSHA.org/conferences/2012/soc_flyer.pdf
(888) 292-5247

November 7-10 Pacific Logging Congress 103rd Annual Convention
Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, Tucson, AZ
<http://pacificloggingcongress.org/content/convention>
(425) 413-2808

February 23 75th Annual Oregon Logging Conference
Lane County Convention Center and Fairgrounds
Eugene, OR
<http://pacificforestfoundation.org/events.html>
(541) 342-2000

April 11, 12 & 13 75th Annual Intermountain Logging Conference and Equipment Show
Mirabeau Park Hotel and Convention Center, Spokane, WA
<http://intermountainlogging.org/>
(208) 245-3425

May 21-23 Region X Voluntary Protection Program Participants Association (VPPPA) Conference
Davenport Hotel, Spokane, WA
<http://www.cbs.state.or.us/OSHA/conferences/2013/VPP-exhibit-packet.pdf>
(503) 947-7441

June 13 Blue Mountain Occupational Health and Safety Conference, Pendleton Convention Center
Pendleton, OR
http://oroSHA.org/conferences/OSHA_conference/blue_mnt_occ_sfty_hl.html
(888) 292-5247



Northwest Forest Worker Safety Review is produced by PNASH at the University of Washington's School of Public Health. PNASH conducts research, develops interventions, and provides professional education and outreach to improve occupational safety and health. We serve workers in farming, fishing and forestry in WA, OR, AK, and ID.

To add names to our distribution list, suggest ideas for future issues, or list events contact Marcy Harrington at (206) 685-8962, (800) 330-0827, or marcyw@uw.edu.

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