

FINAL KY FACE #95KY10201

Date: 16 November 1995

Subject: Logger Killed When Log Rolls Off Truck at Sawmill

SUMMARY

A 63-year-old male logger was struck by a log that rolled off a loaded truck at a sawmill. The victim was working with his two nephews that day and they were preparing to unload the logs from their two trucks. The logs were stacked at least twice as high as the standards on the sides of the flatbed trailers. As one nephew began to unchain the logs from his truck, the victim walked up to the truck, out of view of his nephew. When the chains were released, a log at the top of the load rolled off and struck the victim, pinning him underneath. He died within minutes of massive crushing injuries. In order to prevent similar occurrences, FACE investigators recommend:

- The height of the stack of logs should not exceed the height of the standards on the truck.
- An unbinding cage should be used at the mill during unloading procedures to protect the logger from falling logs.
- Loggers should follow mill guidelines and logging standards for proper unloading procedures.
- Loggers should attend the Master Logger Program for education regarding logging standards and safety practices.
- Lawmakers should consider initiating regulations to limit height of the stack of logs on vehicles using public roadways.

INTRODUCTION

On 28 September 1995, KY FACE was informed by a county coroner of the death of a logger the previous day. An investigation was initiated, and on 23 October 1995, two FACE investigators traveled to the site of the incident. The county coroner was interviewed and copies of reports from the medical examiner and the coroner were obtained. A local newspaper provided an article and photograph of the incident. Investigators were unable to inspect the truck involved in the incident; however, the photograph from the newspaper showed the vehicle with the remaining logs. The manager of the sawmill was interviewed via telephone.

INVESTIGATION

The victim had been self-employed in the family logging business and was assisting his two nephews on the day of the incident. The sawmill where the incident occurred is also family-owned and although they have owned the business for 20 years, this mill is only four years old. The manager stated that the mill has written safety guidelines that are given to every logger who does business there, and loggers are required to check in at the office upon arriving at the mill. He related that there are written procedures for unloading logs from the trucks, and an

experienced forklift driver who has been with the company for nearly 20 years unloads the trucks and is responsible for ensuring that the driver is a safe distance away before beginning the process. The area where the trucks are unloaded is level and relatively smooth, according to the manager.

On the afternoon of 27 September 1995, the victim assisted his nephews with hauling two truckloads of logs to the mill. Both vehicles were Chevrolet flatbed trucks. The newspaper photograph shows that the vertical standards on the truck are about three feet high and the logs appear to be stacked approximately 3-4 feet higher than the standards.

The victim rode with one nephew; they arrived at the sawmill about 2:00 pm and began the unloading procedure. While the forklift driver was unloading the first truck, the other nephew arrived with his load of logs. As he got out of his truck and walked toward the trailer, the victim walked up to the opposite side of the truck, out of view of the nephew. Unaware that anyone was near the truck, the nephew began to unchain the load of logs. When the chains were released, the top log rolled off and struck the victim, pinning him underneath. Emergency medical personnel and local police responded to the scene. The victim was pronounced dead at 3:00pm by the county coroner.

CAUSE OF DEATH

Cause of death according to the coroner's report was massive head and chest injury. No autopsy was performed.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION

Recommendation #1: The height of the stack of logs should not exceed the height of the standards on the truck. (APA Safety Alert 93-S-46)

Discussion: In this case, the height of the load of logs was approximately twice as high as the standards on the trailer. Increasing the height of the standards or lowering the height of the stack would decrease the risk of a log rolling off the truck unexpectedly.

Recommendation #2: An unbinding cage should be used at the mill during unloading procedures to protect the logger from falling logs.

Discussion: The steel unbinding cage made by Stanford Timber Products in East Bernstadt Kentucky is 39 ft. long, 4 ft. wide, and 8 ft. high. To begin the unloading process at the lumberyard, the driver parks the log truck beside the unbinding cage, exits the cab and enters the cage. The driver unfastens the chains/binders using a metal pole with a curved hook and pulls the binders off from within the cage. Steel stakes on top of the cage prevent falling logs from rolling beyond the area protected by the cage. The entire procedure takes place with the driver safely within the unbinding cage. (APA Technical Release 95-R-35)

Recommendation #3: Loggers should follow mill guidelines and logging standards for proper unloading procedures.

Discussion: The procedure at this mill is that the worker unloading the logs is responsible for making sure the driver of the truck is a safe distance away during the unloading process. The forklift driver at the mill was still unloading the first truck when the second truck arrived; the chains were released on the second truck before the forklift driver was ready to begin unloading that truck. A safety hazard is created for all workers when such procedures are not followed.

Recommendation #3: Loggers should attend the Master Logger Program for education regarding logging standards and safety practices.

Discussion: Loggers should be aware of proper procedures and safety practices to ensure a safe environment for workers. It is not known whether the victim or others involved in this incident had attended this program. For information about the Master Logger Program, contact Larry Lowe at the Kentucky Department of Natural Resources (502-564-4496).

Recommendation #4: Lawmakers should consider initiating regulations to limit the height of the stack of logs on vehicles traveling on public roadways.

Discussion: Loggers operating as independent contractors may not be bound by OHS regulations and in an effort to decrease the risk of injury during unloading at a sawmill, limiting log stack height could be regulated by transportation laws. Because transportation of logs to a mill takes place via public roadways, other traveling on roadways are at risk when log height exceeds the stakes due to shifting of the logs and potential failure of the binders. Enforcement based in transportation laws rather than occupational safety regulations may reduce the risk of fatalities occurring at sawmills and reduce the hazard to other vehicles on the road.

REFERENCES

American Pulpwood Association, Inc. (APA), Safety Alert 93-S-46, December 1993.

American Pulpwood Association, Inc. (APA), Technical Release 95-R-35, September 1995.