

FINAL KY FACE #98KY103

Date: 19 February 1999

SUBJECT: Log Rolls off Truck at Sawmill Killing Employee

SUMMARY

In December 1998, a 31-year-old male (the victim) sawmill employee was killed when struck by a log that rolled off the top of the truck. He was preparing the truck to be unloaded when the log rolled off. While most of the logs received by the sawmill were delivered by independent loggers, the company did own one boom truck that their employees used to pick up timber. This was the truck the victim was driving the day of the incident. At the time of the incident, he was working alone.

When the victim returned to the sawmill, the logs were stacked well above the standards with poplar logs. Three straps had been placed around the logs to keep them in place. There were signs posted at the gate and office of the sawmill that stated the logs were not to be unloaded until secured. The victim was waiting in line to unload his logs on a concrete unloading platform. The ground on which truck was parked was slightly sloped towards the passenger side. Although he was not in position yet to be unloaded, he exited the truck and loosened the straps on the driver side and then went to the passenger side to remove the straps. As he neared the passenger side door, he was struck by a falling log. The sound of the fallen log alerted the truck driver in front of him. He initiated the call to Emergency Medical Services (EMS). EMS arrived at the scene at 9:12 a.m. and transported the victim to the hospital. He was pronounced dead at the hospital.

In order to prevent similar incidents from occurring, FACE investigators recommend:

- The height of the logs should not exceed the height of the standards on the truck;
- Binders on logs should not be released prior to securing with an unloading device [1910.265(d)(i)(b)];
- Binders should be released only from the side on which the unloader operates except when the person making the release is using a remote control device or is protected by racks [1910.265(d)(i)(c)];
- Written policies should be in place regarding unloading procedures for loggers at the mill, and the policies should be enforced by the mill owners; and
- Loggers should consider wearing head protection (hard hat) to protect against head injuries from falling objects [1910.265(g)].

INTRODUCTION

FACE investigators were informed of the death of a logger on 6 December 1998. An investigation was initiated and a site visit made on 15 December 1998. An interview was held

with the county coroner who was called to the hospital and visited the site. Photographs of the scene were viewed and copies of the photos and EMS run sheet were obtained.

In this case, the logger worked for the sawmill. He was driving the sawmill's truck and had used it to pick up lumber that day and had returned to have the truck unloaded. The truck was outfitted with a mechanical device (boom) to load and unload the truck. The victim had worked for the sawmill approximately year.

INVESTIGATION

According to the pictures, the day of the incident was a sunny, clear day. The victim began work early that morning picking up logs from independent loggers. The victim drove a truck owned by the sawmill to pick up the logs and then returned to the sawmill to unload them. The stack of logs were bound with three straps. Standards on the sides of the truck were approximately five feet high and the logs were stacked approximately three feet higher than the stakes.

He arrived back at the sawmill with a full truck about 9:00 a.m. The sawmill yard was fairly level. The area where the victim parked his truck had a slight slope towards the passenger side of the truck. There is a designated unloading area at the sawmill which is a concrete pad. Truck drivers are supposed to wait until they reach this area before beginning the unloading procedure. The driver apparently exited the vehicle, loosened the three straps on the driver's side, and then went to the passenger's side to remove the straps. As he was removing the last strap on the passenger side, one of the logs fell off the truck and struck the victim in the head. Although the incident was unwitnessed, one of the independent loggers in the truck ahead, heard the sound of a log falling. He knew that a log should not have fallen and went towards the sound. He found the victim lying on the ground. Immediately 911 was called and EMS workers arrived on the site within minutes. The victim was transported to the hospital and the coroner was summoned. The victim was pronounced dead.

CAUSE OF DEATH

Cause of death as listed on the coroner's report was

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION

Recommendation #1: The height of the stack of logs should not exceed the height of the standards on the truck.

Discussion: In this case, the height of the logs exceeded the height of the standards. Stacking the logs in this fashion, increases the likelihood that the logs will shift in transit and potentially fall off once binders are released.

Recommendation #2: Binders on logs should not be released prior to securing with an unloading device. [1910.265(d)(1)(i)(b)]

Discussion: Securing the load with a front-end loader prior to loosening the binders will likely prevent the logs from rolling off the truck if they have shifted in transit. In this case, it is possible that if a front-end loader had been on the passenger side securing the top logs, it would have prevented any logs from rolling off the truck as the binders were released.

Recommendation #3: Binders should be released only from the side on which the unloader operates except when the person making the release is protected by racks or is using a remote device [1910.265(d)(1)(i)(c)].

Discussion: This requirement instituted in conjunction with recommendation #2 may have prevented any logs from rolling off the stack. If the logger did not stack the logs above the standards, they would most likely be able to release the binders on the driver's side and then throw the straps over top the logs, eliminating the need to go to the passengers' side and pull off the straps for unloading purposes. By staying on one side of the truck and using a mechanical device to hold the logs in place while the binders are being released, the probability of a log rolling off and fatally striking a worker is greatly reduced.

Recommendation #4: Written policies should be in place regarding unloading procedures for loggers at the mill, and the policies should be enforced by the mill owners.

Discussion: Written guidelines for unloading procedures at the mill would help ensure that the logs are unloaded properly, providing a safe work environment for loggers, drivers, and the employees of the mill. There were visible signs on the property which stated the binders were not to be unfastened until the load was secured by one of the sawmill employees.

Recommendation #5: Loggers should consider wearing head protection (hard hat) to protect against head injuries from a falling log.

Discussion: In some instances, hard hats may provide adequate protection against lethal head injuries from being struck by falling logs.