



Profits Before Safety?



I don't think so! This column is known as the "As WE See It" editorial published monthly from the American Loggers Council. We value the opinion of the professionals who are harvesting and hauling the wood fiber necessary to accommodate the daily needs of the general public, but sometimes we need to vent the frustrations that we run into when trying to help provide a safer working environment for the men and women in our industry.

For the past 20 (that's right, **twenty**) years, the members of the American Loggers Council have been seeking to allow state legal weight tolerances on the Federal Interstate Highway system for **safety reasons**. That include getting the trucks away from small towns and communities where stop signs, right and left turns, pedestrians, and yes, even railroad crossings become hazards that could be avoided if those trucks as well as other agricultural commodity haulers were allowed on the Interstate Highways with those **already state legal** loads.

There are no windfall profits expected from this move, nor will all routes to the mills include the Interstate System, and yes, on half of those miles on these short hauls the trucks are empty, and yes, data from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration's Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS) shows that there are fewer fatalities on the Interstate than on all other classifications of roads for log trucks; yet, the railroads continue to take a position against those trucks gaining access on the Federal Interstate Highway System with those already state legal loads.

A recent request to meet with some of their representatives was turned down, and they are already lining up to try and prevent the proposed amendment to make exemptions that would allow these trucks to access the Federal Interstate Highway System. I hope that their reasons are not based on suppressing competition for freight to maximize their profits, and I do expect to hear from them on just how unsafe it would be to allow these trucks on the Interstate, even though they are subject to all of the DOT inspections and CSA regulations that the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and Department of Transportation administer.

What is their real motive, safety or profits? You decide.

Danny Dructor is the Executive Vice President for the American Loggers Council with offices near Hemphill, Texas. The American Loggers Council is a 501 (c)(6) not for profit trade organization representing professional timber harvesters in 32 states across the United States. If you would like to learn more about the ALC, please visit their web site at www.amloggers.com, or contact their office at 409-625-0206.