



Safety First



I recently stumbled across an article posted in the North Kentucky Tribune titled, “Logging by far deadliest job in U.S.; fishing, pilots/flight engineers next, says U.S. Labor Dept.” When your mission states “To enhance the logging profession, provide a unified voice on logging issues; and cooperate with public, industrial and private timberland owners to further sustainable forestry practices,” I hardly believe that this is what we had in mind.

Seeing how I thought that we were doing a better job promoting safety which, in my mind, is a part of the professionalism we are supposed to be “enhancing,” I went to the Department of Labor’s web site, or more importantly the Bureau of Labor Statistics, to see if I could determine just where the problems are. As it turns out, I discovered that we are lumped into this category that includes Farming, Fishing and Forestry, so I had to dig a little deeper. What I did find out is that there was actually a decrease in the number of fatalities in the Forestry and Logging category from 2014 to 2015, but unfortunately, there were fewer of us doing those jobs due to downsizing, mechanization and attrition, so the number of fatalities per 100,000 employed actually rose during 2015.

This is not the direction we want to be headed for several reasons.

First, the loss of life due to an accident that could have been prevented is not acceptable, and as we all know, most accidents are preventable.

Second, when we are trying to attract new employees to this industry, this is not the track record that needs to be advertised.

Third, when workers comp rates go up, this is the reason. No matter how safe your job site is, there are others in the industry who are not performing as safely as they could be and you are helping to pay the bills for them.

During our Summer Board of Director’s meeting last July, we were discussing some of the issues that we should be focusing on over the next several years, and Dave Cupp with Walsh Timber in Zwolle, Louisiana and representing our Individual Logger Members made the statement that we should also focus on losing our status as being the most dangerous occupation in the nation and at the very least get out of the top three. Visiting again with Dave this week he stated, “I feel very strongly that we can change this culture and not accept this as a part of our business.”

The American Loggers Council will be addressing this issue in 2017 and beyond, and by doing so will be helping to create a safe work environment where we can attract and retain the best and brightest young men and women in the country to sustainably harvest our Nation’s forests.

You can help us. Don't ignore safety issues on your job. Discuss near misses at tailgate safety sessions, recognize safe practices and offer incentives for achieving safety goals, and by all means, make it your responsibility that everyone has the opportunity to return home each and every evening to their families. Let's make this a safe, productive and prosperous 2017.

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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.