



Working Together, Are We?



By Danny Dructor

If you have been following the legislative efforts of the American Loggers Council for very long, you will already know that we have been working to try and get state legal weight tolerances on the Federal Interstate Highway System for way too long now. After all, the project began in 1997 and here we are 21 years later with the same result, nothing has changed yet.

Last year the Forest Resources Association came on board and for the past twelve months, both of our organizations have worked on the issue, seeking support up on the Hill in Washington, DC. We have both heard the same story, the railroads don't support this.

There are two ways to get things done in D.C., one way is to throw money at an issue and the other is to form relationships with those that represent you. We prefer the 2nd path of creating relationships for two main reasons; 1) We don't have funding to throw at issues, and 2) when you create relationships, there is a true understanding of the issue and we are not simply attempting to buy influence.

At a recent Team Safe Trucking meeting in South Carolina, I had the opportunity to speak to a group of individuals who represent insurance carriers insuring log trucks. I pleaded with them to get on board with us to help us get this legislation passed. If there is one thing I know for certain, their lobbying power in Washington is just as powerful, if not more so, than that of the railroads.

What came out of that discussion was a real eye-opener for me, and one that I feel we should all think about when asking for another person's help. I was told that the reason that the insurance lobby was still hesitant in supporting our proposal was because we still haven't proven that we can clean up our act on the highways, and allowing trucks to drive 70-75 miles per hour on the Interstate was a real concern to them.

Because all of this took place under the context of a Team Safe Trucking meeting, and because we were discussing driver training for both new and veteran log haulers, it dawned on me that what they are concerned about is correct. Until we can voluntarily show that we are willing to make the effort to create a safer environment for our drivers and the motoring public, we will be hard pressed to gain support for this issue outside of our own industry.

The first training module is in place and you can go online at www.teamsafetrucking.org to not only register for the training, but also print out certificates of completion once you have completed the course. There is a module for drivers and a module for owner-operators, and the best part is there is no charge for the course, but a donation to the group would certainly

be helpful and assist them in keeping things current and being able to develop future courses and printable materials.

We have always taken great pride in the fact that we do not go to Washington, DC looking for a handout. Our issues are generally fashioned around the concept of “just allow us to do our jobs” without further burdensome regulation. What we haven’t thought about is the repercussions that “our” proposals might have on others that are allied to this industry. If we can’t voluntarily improve our safety and decrease the incident rates with our current drivers and freight system, how can we expect others to work with us to support legislation that could end up costing them?

Let’s all really begin to work together. Volunteering a little bit of time to educate and train ourselves to create a safer environment just might get us what we need; the ability to haul our already state legal weights on the safer, more efficient Federal Interstate Highway System. We will remain committed to this effort.

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.