

SAFETY SAVES

In most cases, saying you're 'Number One' is something to be proud of. However, when the context of the discussion is the most hazardous occupations... well, that's not the kind of publicity we want for this profession we call logging.

In a recent Missoulian article, "The 15 most dangerous jobs in the US" (July 23, 2017), logging is ranked at the top with a rate of 132.7 fatalities per 100,000 workers. The average for all other industries is roughly 10 per 100,000.

To be clear, the logging community has made vast improvements in the delivery and application of safe operating procedures in recent decades... however, changing the culture for those who work in inherently dangerous professions demands a never-ending commitment.

It is fair to say that when comparing the logging industry to all other industries, is not an apples to apples comparison. After all, we work in an environment that is often beyond our control—short of staying home. Our tools and equipment pose risks that the "average" worker simply does not have to respect.

Logging—whether mechanical, conventional and/or yarder sides—involves massive weights subject to the inherent momentum of falling, rolling, and sliding trees and logs. Then add the risk of the natural elements such as uneven, unstable or rough terrain; inclement weather, including rain, snow, lightning, winds, and extreme heat and cold; as well as the remote and isolated work sites where medical assistance is not immediately accessible.

In combination, these hazards/risks present a significant challenge to employees working in logging operations throughout all of Montana and the intermountain west.

In researching both fatalities and injuries associated with logging, there are common root causes:

- Employees not recognizing hazards.
- Lack of training and/ or not clearly understand job.
- Fatigue from strenuous labor and/or long hours.
- Taking unnecessary risks to enhance for productivity.
- Lack of Personal Protective Equipment, or incorrect use of PPE.
- Equipment failure.

As a logger, how can you ensure the safety of yourself and your crew? This is a constant challenge, but one the MLA safety rangers are willing to assist you and your crew with. We encourage investing in professional development for both you and your employees and urge you to take advantage of trainings the MLA offers as well as services offered by our external partners. Do you have suggestions for training? If so please let us know.

Currently, heat and wildfire present immediate risks that we all need to recognize and deal with. With that, your Safety Rangers wish you and safe and productive summer as we await a season-ending weather system that will end this long fire season.

Until next issue, remember that our goal is to be *Number One* in making sure every logger gets home safely every day. *\$afety \$aves!*