DRIVER CRUSHED BETWEEN TWO LOG TRUCKS

SAFETY ALERT

August 2015

BACKGROUND:
On a clear, sunny, winter afternoon at a mill in the South, a log truck driver was removing a load warning flag from the back of his tree-length load of timber.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:
The 51-year-old driver was standing at the rear of his rig removing the load warning flag, when another log truck pulled behind him in the line of trucks outside the scalehouse at the mill. The drivers of both trucks were experienced, and they were wearing proper Personal Protective Equipment for the task.

UNSAFE ACTS AND CONDITIONS:
Most mills have policies requiring the drivers to remain in the cab and to not loosen or remove binders, end-of-load flags, or anything else until they have crossed the woodyard’s scales and arrived at the woodyard-designated unbinding or unloading area. In this case the driver wanted to speed up the unloading process, so he ignored the safety policy and got out and walked to the rear of his vehicle. Another truck pulled up closely behind him, and the driver of this second truck did the same thing—he exited the cab of his truck and walked around to the back of his load to remove his end-of-load flags. This second driver did not shut off the engine, and if he did in fact apply the parking brake, it did not hold.

ACCIDENT:
There was a minor incline to the surface where both trucks were stopped. The second truck rolled forward and pinned the first driver between his load and the rolling truck.

INJURY:
The impact caused immediate death, according to the county coroner.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:
- Wood-receiving facilities should put rules in place forbidding drivers from walking between/behind loads to remove flags, binders, etc. until they have crossed the scales and are in the designated location. The policy should be strictly enforced, with no truck allowed to weigh in unless flags, binders, etc. are in place properly on the load.
- Whenever a driver exits the cab at a mill site, he or she should always wear all required PPE. It is advisable that drivers wear high-visibility vests also, so other drivers and woodyard personnel are aware of the driver’s location.
- Before stepping out of the cab during the unbinding or unloading process, always set the parking brake (and ensure that the parking brake is functional). In some cases, it may also be advisable to shut off the engine.
- Logging and log trucking injuries and death are more likely to happen when one or more individuals are in a hurry and tempted to bypass safety procedures.

Reviewed by:
Southwide Safety Committee
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