LOG SECURITY HAMMERS

Timber Security: theft

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INTRODUCTION: High-value Appalachian hardwood logs are occasionally stolen off log decks. MeadWestvaco foresters in West Virginia have designed a hammer to brand or mark valuable logs at the landing so that they can be identified later at a log yard if the logs are suspected to be stolen.

GENERAL FEATURES: The purpose of a log security hammer is to put a small, inconspicuous mark on a log or pile of logs that one suspects may be diverted to an unauthorized delivery point, or that you suspect may be stolen from the logger’s landing. The key to making this work is the ability to identify the stolen log by the hammer’s mark at the unauthorized delivery point (or by an unauthorized logger at the correct delivery point). The hammer should be constructed such that the mark is fairly small and inconspicuous on the log(s)—so that it would not be noticed upon casual inspection, but that the person using the hammer can find this mark on the log at a later date.

Fig. 1: Welder’s hammer before modification.

Fig. 2: Welder’s hammer converted into a log security hammer.
OPERATION: Marking one or both ends of the log is the nominal procedure. If one wishes to be more discreet, a mark could be placed on the side of a log in the bark. To make a stronger potential case for action by law enforcement and prosecution, videotaping the marking procedure showing the hammer marks on the ends of the logs, along with a description or dimensions of the logs, would be beneficial.

SPECIFICATIONS & COST: It is a fairly simple matter to make a hammer. We used a “Welder’s Hammer” with a coil handle. Cost is about $10 to $15 per hammer. The two ends of the hammer are cut off, leaving a 1 to 2-inch base at the tee of the hammer. On this base is then welded the metal letters or unique markings that one wants to use to “brand” the logs. In our case, we used “MWV” for MeadWestvaco. These metal letters can be obtained from a hardware or welding supply store, or off the internet. For example, go to www.chhanson.com/stamps.html, and you can decide on a size and set, then click on the links to stores or internet sites that sell them. (Amazon.com costs range from $25 to $120, depending on the set; we paid $42 plus tax for a set of quarter-inch-size “Premier” metal letter stamps from our local hardware store.)

Fig. 3: Security mark is very inconspicuous on the end of a log. Can you find it?

Fig. 4: Close-up of Fig. 3’s log reveals “MWV” mark (near center of photo).

Fig. 5: Example of C.H. Hanson’s metal letter stock from which “brand” can be made.

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