**Fatalities in the Woods**

Most accidents in recent months in our industry have been truck drivers being seriously injured or killed. Several recent articles in newspapers and television reports have highlighted the dangers truck drivers encounter. One headline read “Log truck driver, single father of 3, killed in tragic accident.” Another headline read “Ground man crushed between two trailers.” In each of these preventable deaths, someone was not aware that these individuals were in harm’s way. The third headline read “Driver crushed by his own truck.” This last incident was preventable but was the operators failing to set the brake.

In the first incident, the 41 year old driver was killed when his log truck ran over him while he was strapping the load. The newly created dirt road was wet and muddy and a dozer was pulling the log truck out. The driver was still securing his load, got trapped up under the rear of wheels of the trailer. He was crushed by the weight and was pronounced dead at the scene. The dozer operator did not know he was there.

In the second incident, a spot truck brought a load of tree length pine from the landing and set it out near the road so a road tractor could pick it up. An employee was helping to spot as the driver backed the trailer into the space next to three other loaded trailers. The third trailer in line was also a plantation style trailer with the lower standards on the trailer. As the driver backed the trailer in, he stopped for the ground man to lower the landing gear but when the man did not come out and lower the gear the driver went to check on him. He found the ground man crushed between the number 3 trailer and his trailer. The driver believed the ground man was clear and did not check before he moved.

The third incident involved a 51 year old driver. He pulled away from the loader and radioed the loader operator that he was stopping to tighten his straps. As he walked to the rear of the trailer, the truck rolled back and he was caught in between the dual axles. He was drug under the wheels as the truck free rolled backwards. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

**Safety Precautions to prevent similar accidents:**

* Ground personnel should wear high visibility vests so operators and drivers can see them.
* Train all personnel to be aware of the dangers in their work area.
* Communication is key to preventing these accidents
  + Use radios, walkie-talkies, etc. to make sure no one is in the wrong place.
  + Walk around the vehicles before backing or pulling operations start.
* Before hooking up and towing a stuck vehicle, make sure all ground personnel are away from the stuck vehicle.
* When using ground personnel to spot trailers, have an established safe zone for the individual to stand before backing.
* Keep distractions to a minimum.
* When exiting the truck cab, always set the parking brake.