

# FACT SHEET

No. 15

## Timber & Timber Harvesting in West Virginia

Winter, 2001

### Logger Certification

Timber harvesting has always been considered to be among the most hazardous of all occupations. The most serious category of injuries is workers being hit by falling trees, limbs, tops, and rolling logs. The severity of injury ranges from lacerations and fractures to permanent disability and death for the worker. This has resulted in alarmingly high Workers Compensation rates for the employer and additional expenditures for the government. The result has been mandatory training programs for loggers to ensure that they can recognize and correct potential safety hazards associated with individual work assignments as well as general recognition and prevention of safety hazards in the industry.

Chapter 19, Article 1B, Section 7 of the State Code of West Virginia mandates that loggers supervising logging crews in West Virginia be trained and certificated. There are no specific requirements for the training of loggers in general, but training for all loggers is mandated by regulation 29 CFR Part 1910 of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), of the U. S. Department of Labor

The state training program for certified loggers mandates training in the safe conduct of timbering, first aid procedures and best management practices for sediment control during timber harvesting. The goal is to assure that timbering is conducted in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations. 19-1B-7-g provides that every timbering operation *“must have at least one person certified pursuant to this section supervising the operation at any time the timbering operation is being conducted.”*

Certification of logging supervisors (certified loggers) by the West Virginia Division of Forestry follows the successful completion of training courses taught or supervised by Division personnel and the payment of a license fee of \$50. The license fee is annual; the certification training is repeated each third year.

Can a person inexperienced in logging be certificated as a certified logger by successfully taking the prescribed courses and paying the license fee? The answer at this time is yes.

Can a person inexperienced in logging become a certified logger and actively supervise a logging crew? This is a decision of the timbering operator who is required

by OSHA to ensure *“that each current and new employee can properly and safely perform the work tasks and operate the tools, equipment, machines and vehicles used in their job.”* The regulation also specifies that a new employee, prior to initial assignment, shall be trained in his job assignment and *“shall work under the close supervision of a designated person until the employee demonstrates to the employer the ability to safely perform their new duties independently.”* It’s doubtful if any employer would chance the creation of unsafe conditions by hiring an unskilled person as a supervisor and it’s doubtful he would consider a certificate in lieu of *“demonstrates”* in the above quotation.

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