

FACT SHEET

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Timber & Timber Harvesting in West Virginia

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The Loggers Safety Initiative Program (LSI).

As 2002 begins, logging in West Virginia has the highest workers' compensation base rate of any major industry in the State. The premium is \$48.35 per \$100 of wages. As a consequence of this, several logging companies have joined in a proactive effort to reduce logging accidents and subsequent claims through training and general awareness programs.

The LSI is a four year pilot project made up of three components – training, on-site inspections and premium rate reductions. The project, initiated in 1999, is administered cooperatively by the West Virginia Division of Worker Compensation, West Virginia Forestry Association, West Virginia Division of Forestry and the Appalachian Hardwood Research Center located at West Virginia University.

Training – All employees are required to attend indoor and outdoor sessions that teach and emphasize safe work skills. Skidder, dozer and loader operators and truck drivers attend a one-day workshop annually led by trained forestry professionals. These sessions usually include a field segment where participants perform a safety review of the equipment. Those operating chainsaws must initially complete all four levels of the nationally recognized chain saw safety program called “the game of logging” after which they have to complete an annual refresher course. All receive training in state and federal personal safety requirements such as the use of hard hats, hard-toed shoes, danger tree situations, etc.

On-site inspections – Companies involved in the 4-year pilot program receive three on-site safety inspections annually. These inspections, performed by a third party contractor operating under a grant awarded to the program, are to confirm compliance with the safe work practices based on the OSHA regulation and LSI guidelines. When a company receives a compliance inspection score below 80%, it can ask for a review by a committee. If the score remains below 80%, the company is removed from the program; if the score improves, the company is allowed to continue. A company found to be in violation can request a “last chance” review just once each year.

Premium-rate Reductions – A company that remains in conformance with LSI safety requirements and that remains in good standing with the Division of Workers'

Compensation, is rewarded with a reduction in its premiums. The reductions are 15% each of the first two years, 10% the third year and 5% the fourth year. Any company that is disqualified for noncompliance or that voluntarily withdraws from the program is required to repay any reductions it has received during the current enrollment year.

The LSI Program has received tremendous cooperation through the dedicated activities of many companies, agencies and individuals. Several wood consuming mills have made financial contributions in addition to committing personnel to assist with training and planning sessions. The Workers' Compensation Division has provided \$125,000 per year to the program and has invested innumerable staff hours in answering questions, providing insight based on their experiences and in assisting with the training. The Appalachian Hardwood Research Center located at West Virginia University conducts training programs and offers additional services to participating companies. The West Virginia Division of Forestry assists with the training activities and cooperates with the West Virginia Workers' Compensation Division in verifying company records. Although the participating logging companies are working for a rate reduction, they are to be commended for committing to an effort that will ultimately benefit all West Virginia logging companies.

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