

Logging injury and fatality surveillance in the USA

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Abstract:

National injury rates for logging have declined since the 1970's although the rate of decline has slowed in the last decade. Over that time mechanization and regional changes have played an important role in that trend. The change in logging employment from larger firms in the Pacific Northwest to smaller firms in the Southeast contributed to the trend and probably affected how representative the data was. Injury data are collected from firms with more than 10 employees so less than 20% of US firms are among potential survey respondents. Among workers truck drivers are particularly underrepresented since they are often independent of logging firms. While workers compensation data may be more inclusive analyses have been regional and of limited duration. Since the 1990's fatal injury rates have shown significant annual fluctuation but little decline in spite of increasing worker productivity. Fatalities related to Struck by falling objects were still nearly 50% of fatalities as has been the case for nearly 40 years. The inability of productivity and mechanization in logging to reduce the rate and source of fatal injuries is a major concern.

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