Forest Landowner Safety

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Introduction

A hazard is set of conditions that create the potential for harm or injury. People encounter many hazards each day that they perceive to be uncontrollable. However, others are actively controlled through the equipment choice (cars with high safety ratings) or behavior (using seatbelts, obeying traffic rules).

Individuals often have misperceptions of both the likelihood that the hazard will result in an injury and the severity of the injury that results from those hazards. This poster highlights a some significant hazards for active forest landowners and the equipment and behavior that will minimize the risk and severity of injury.

Significance

Woods work: Data from hospital admissions indicated five times more injuries treated for occasional wood cutters than for professional loggers. The primary injury agents were similar, falling objects and chainsaws.

Farm tractors: In Alabama about nine fatalities per year result from tractors and implements and four of those result from tractor overturn.

- Since 2008 there were twice as many fatalities recorded for acreage owners than for all professional farming operators in Alabama.

ATV's: There were over 300 ATV related deaths and 115,000 ATV-related injuries treated in U. S. emergency rooms in 2010.

Chainsaws: Nearly 27,000 chainsaw related injuries were treated in U. S. emergency rooms in 2007.

Tractors and Tractor Rollover

Rollover: In the US about one half of all tractor related fatalities are due to tractor rollovers.
Overturns can happen very quickly in response to conditions like:

- Pulling loads uphill
- Stuck in the mud
- Loads hitched above the drawbar
- Sharp turns
- Quick change in direction
- Uneven terrain
- Pulling loads that overpower the tractor

**ROPS:** Rollover Protective Structures with seatbelts are 99% effective in preventing fatalities from rollovers.

- Newer farm tractors are equipped with ROPS and seatbelts.
- Older tractors can be retrofit with ROPS and seatbelts. Search for tractor models at [www.ca.uky.edu/rops](http://www.ca.uky.edu/rops)
- **Always use** the seatbelt on all tractors with ROPS to have a safe operation.

**Farm implements:** Mowers of some type are commonly used on acreages for maintaining roads, yards, and wildlife openings. All mowing operations must be done with tractors with ROPS. Mowers can produce flying object hazards to bystanders and operators are subject to hazards from the PTO, especially if the shaft is not properly guarded. See the link below for proper installation of PTO guards.

**Links:**

- [www.aces.edu/farmsafety/](http://www.aces.edu/farmsafety/)

**Planning work in the woods**

Since an accident is an “unplanned event” planning has a major role in controlling hazards.

**Emergency response:** Have a well stocked emergency and first aid kits.

**Communications:** Check whether there is cellphone reception for voice or text before starting an activity. Satellite messaging GPS devices or personal locators may also be valuable for reaching help.
While communication technology provides a sense of security, accidents can happen in ways to make that technology useless.

**Work in groups:** For more hazardous tasks, it is important to work with someone to watch for hazards, share the workload, render first aid, and call for help.

**Itinerary:** Share an schedule of locations and activities with someone else, and prearrange a check-in time. If the check-in time passes, that person will know which locations to check and render assistance.

**Chainsaws**

- Read and understand the operators manual.
- Inspect the saw to confirm that it is in good working order (including the safety features).
- Ensure that the complexity of the job matches the skill level and experience of the operator.
  - Training opportunities may be found through a local chainsaw dealer.
- Don’t work alone.
- Understand the reactive forces of the saw (especially kickback).
- Understand how compression and tension forces in wood affect chainsaw hazards.
- Be aware that fatigue and hydration play a major role in the operator mistakes that lead to injury.
- Wear all the suggested PPE.

**Links**

- [www.forestapps.com](http://www.forestapps.com)
- [www.loggingsafety.com/content/chain-saws-and-manual-felling](http://www.loggingsafety.com/content/chain-saws-and-manual-felling)

**ATVs**

ATVs have added considerably to the convenience of travelling in forests due to their large engine power and low weight. It’s those specific design parameters that have contributed to many injuries and fatalities. Many ATVs are put to work on heavy tasks since they have the engine power to carry significant loads and pull small implements. However their low weight may make the machines unstable during heavy operations.

- Read and understand the owners manual.
- Attend ATV training programs.
- Wear safety gear (helmets, boots, long pant, eye protection).
- Keep the speed low if trail conditions are unknown.
- Avoid implements that are not designed specifically for ATVs.
- Comply with maximum load limits set by the manufacturer.
Approaching Forest Operations

During an on-going forest operation the woods become someone else’s worksite. The supervisor has the right and responsibility to control hazards and ensure worker and bystander safety. Any visitor should:

- Clearly communicate your intention to come on the worksite to the supervisor and wait for permission.
  - Do not attempt to observe operation from the area without permission of the supervisor and awareness of the crew.
- Be prepared to wear all required PPE, especially a high visibility hard hat and vest.
- Follow any specific safety directions the supervisor or designees may have.

Avoid hazards in logging:

- Stay at least two tree lengths from overhead hazards (falling trees, trees lifted by loader).
- Stay more than 300-500 feet from flying object hazards (felling machines, buck saws, delimbers, chippers, and mulchers).
- Observe felling machine activity from a safe distance behind the machine.
- Stay at least one tree length from active skid trails.
- Do not walk over on wood piles.

To communicate with operators/workers, take a position outside of the hazard zone and get the operators attention with hand signals, radio, or telephone. Wait until the machine is powered down, implements are grounded and the operator gives some signal to approach.