

DEVELOPMENT OF SAFETY PROGRAMMES IN LOGGING

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Jim asked me to talk on this topic after hearing the other speakers. In doing so I will try to integrate some of the information of the last hour or so. One question is - The development of New Zealand safety programmes in comparison with which other safety programmes? If I may, I will give my opinions on the "guts of the issue". It will be a fairly personal view based on my experience with other industries and my five years with C.S.I.R.O. in Australia's logging industry.

I am familiar with the development of logging safety in some parts of Australia and with the Swedish programmes, including the recent one called "Enhanced safety in forestry: A campaign of action!!" I recommend this report to anyone worker, contractor/manager, who wants to reduce injury in the bush.

This "action" project headed by Bo Pettersson of Skogsarbeten must be one of the best efforts in logging safety. The four year project from 1976 to 1980 was, however, only the tail-end of many years of research and development by Norway, Sweden and Finland on their logging systems. I must emphasise this: there is many years of ergonomic R&D behind the Scandinavian's present state-of-the-art in logging management.

Slide : Logging accidents in Sweden showing the downward trend from 1976-1980.

In their recent major report, Pettersson and his colleagues emphasised the significant fall in injury in their logging, for a variety of reasons that I will list in a moment. Can we assume that the figures are lower in 1984? Or, do the graphs we have here reveal the bottom line as far as injury control in logging is concerned? In their 83' translation they did emphasise, "The accident situation is still serious and further measures are needed".

I ask myself why should New Zealand be any different! The evidence appears unreliable either way. I feel they have executed a very good programme of action research. The Pettersson project had major support from Sweden's National Board of Occupational Safety and Health. I got the impression it was somewhat of a showpiece. Forestry is a big chunk of their G.N.P. Sweden also has a vocational training network far ahead of anything we have in Australia or New Zealand.

Safety programmes in Sweden, Finland, Germany, etc., have two strong Government branches to rely on :

1. Vocational skill training, and
2. Occupational health/ergonomics.

* This is where the recruitment of labour is based. They create a labour pool.

We can trace their influence down through :

- the central boards and research units
- to regional centres, companies, and
- through the cutter/instructor and clinics
- to the man, your - production unit !!

What are the reasons for Swedens success in pulling down bush injuries so dramatically?

- First, they had reliable measurement to identify problems clearly and assess the success of counter measures on a local and national level.
- Second, they began to realise the vital role of cutter instructors as the final link for the skill and health branches I showed previously.
- Third, they began to fit the equipment to the man-the chain-saws, the operator cabins.
- Fourth, they changed payment systems drastically to reduce this pressure for risky behaviour and poor workmanship, though personally I'm not sure this is the case.
- Fifth, they did put a lot of effort into protective equipment with a modicum of success.
- Sixth, they took the factory environment to the worker with mechanisation, changing problems rather than removing them entirely. And still leaving over half their cut with the man on foot incidentally.

How far has New Zealand come in achieving these straightforward advances? I look forward to finding out by Friday!

If you read the Scandinavian reports you see how they tried all the technical ergonomic solutions - here is their ideal faller!

Slide : The Warrior - an idealistic Swedish faller.

Then they suddenly discovered something I was told in the first week working with Tasmanian bushmen. All safety programmes must rest on the man - your production unit - being :

1. Self directing : because the bush is not a factory but needs flexibility on the part of the operator or the crew.
2. Self motivating - because on a wet day when your gear has broken down for the third time it is only you who decides to soldier on and not the foreman who imagines he has the whip hand.

3. Self protecting : because your skills, knowledge and self respect stop you getting injured and not some book of rules or an expensive safety programme.

Piecework serves some of these functions but at what cost?

You see their realisation of this more clearly when you read Swedish discussion of greater operator involvement in planning, or major reorganisation of work. For example :

- Their schemes for near-accident reporting,
- Their major thrust on cutter/instructors.
- Their attempt at industrial democracy - if you like!, down where the action and injuries occur.

All they are emphasising is that the guts of a good safety programme is :

Fit, skilled and competent men with the best equipment possible with room to move and a realistic understanding of the risks and demands of the work. So easy to state yet so hard to achieve, for all the reasons you managers should be aware of.

You will deduce from this that I am not keen on the idea of a separate safety programme as an appendage to the way work is managed. I have seen enough productive and safe hardwood crews to be confident in saying that efficient logging management must be management with an ergonomic perspective.

Why will this be more the case in the future? Stopping injuries, just like getting good production, requires skills and patience of a professional manager. This slide is based on one from the American Society of Safety Engineers.

Increasingly in Australia groups other than management are dictating what are acceptable and unacceptable levels of injury in an industry. These pressures are a real concern to some of the more shrewd managers I know and come from more aggressive unions like the F.E.D.A., the insurance companies who are handling more common law claims, and even environmentalists, so I was told last week.

In Australian society people are more than just nibbling away at managements prerogative in the safety and health area. They are biting!

The data base logging statistics are just a sad reflection of Australia's industrial injury statistics generally. Our new Federal Institute of Occupational Health and Safety will make this a priority area, but how long before they get to logging?

Here you seem much better off in New Zealand with your Accident Compensation Commission.

The term plan and support, rather the more familiar management planning and control, only reflects the move to greater coalface democracy aimed at producing the self protecting logging worker I mentioned earlier.

Human factors !! Do I need to list them? Those human foibles

and inefficiencies in the system : from logging supervisors who will not co-operate with cutter/instructors to senior management only paying lip service to injury prevention because of their own prejudices or work problems.

I assume some of you have taken the ergonomic view of logging for some time - it's simply 1980's management. Maybe the word is just new to you. For the remainder, it is your choice where industry and labour are headed in the next decade!

You, after all, will suffer the consequences of perpetuating unnecessary injuries or ill health in the future that could have been prevented.