

APPLICATION OF THE BUSH CODE

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After being asked by the organiser of this seminar to give you my thoughts on the effectiveness and application of the Bush Safety Code, I discovered I needed to refresh my mind on it and found that after 25 years of supervising logging gangs I didn't find it had much impact on the training and supervision of loggers.

Recent interest has been cultivated by the fact that candidates for loggers certificates are tested on the rules laid down in the code in the same way as a driver is examined on the road code.

The main impacts of the Bush Work Code that come to mind are the easily enforceable rules of wearing safety hats, having safety strops on highlead rigging, putting safety mitts on chainsaws and not loading log trucks above the pins.

In the course of my logging career I can't be sure I would have met a Bush Inspector more than twelve times on my sites. Most of those twelve visits would have been in the past ten years and the earlier visits would usually have been as the result of having reported a serious accident.

In recent times the tip off that the Bush Inspector was on his rounds would ensure a quick check to make sure all saws on the landing had mitts.

These observations help to bear out my contention that the bush code as published is a basic rule book of easily measured and observed basic minimum standards but fails to define the perimeters of practice for a safely organised operation.

I remember on one occasion, we were operating a complex skyline, logging and loading system and was visited by the Bush Inspector and after he watched the operation for a while he left after writing me a note to say that the first aid box was not in very good order and I should have it cleaned up and replenished immediately. I would have welcomed the opportunity to discuss other safety aspects with him. I believe that the reason for Bush Inspectors not being able to be more critical is that our present Bush Working Code is written in a negative way and is not an authoritative text.

The buck stops with a competent person. This is the reason I believe the Bush Code is not the often quoted, well referred to document that it should be amongst members of logging crews.

The competent person often mentioned in the code has his own rules

for safe working accumulated over many years of practical application and experience and although he has the standards for safe working in his head, they are not clear black and white on paper.

THE CODE ITSELF

I will make some attempt to comment on and make some constructive criticism of the code as printed from a contractor's point of view.

SECTION 3

It is a very difficult decision to make to stop work for weather and over the years this has caused much personal concern. I usually used the yard stick of quitting if a tree blew over, but my feeling was always that one day we will be too late.

Many employees, especially large company ones, take advantage of the section on protective clothing and equipment to be very wasteful and extravagant. The suppliers of this equipment also use it to be able to sell poor quality, poorly developed, safety gear.

When ear muffs became regular issue, we wasted much money on ear muffs that fell to pieces. We also had bad experiences with protective trousers. No safety equipment should be made compulsory until well designed and proven equipment is available.

SECTION 4

Steel wedges surely could become a thing of the past and provision of suitable modern material wedges of suitable design be provided.

I have never been able to understand why the ruling on plastic petrol containers is included. I have never experienced any problems with plastic, but the alternative expensive containers have cost me a lot of money.

SECTION 5

The whole chainsaw section is difficult to enforce on employees. In some cases the mitt negates the safety features built into the saw.

The sharpening of the chain is a cause of accidents in many cases and is not even mentioned. Taking the depth gauges down too far is the main cause of many kickback accidents.

SECTION 6

The whole section on driving and wedging of trees could be updated with better training and the knowledge introduced to the industry by research such as that carried out by LIRA a few years ago. I have always been of the opinion that the scarfing and backcutting was the factor that caused accidents with driving. Jacking or wedging a poorly scarfed tree is just as dangerous as driving.

SECTION 12

Bearing in mind the cost of wire rope and the number of applications

where rope failure is of no danger, the rules laid down are rather superfluous.

SECTIONS 13 AND 14

I have never seen a test certificate for a shackle used in the bush and I believe that the main manufacturer of blocks and shackles only provide them when asked for. If this section was enforced, the gear would be too heavy to use. The majority of blocks heavy enough for logging are not of a type to comply with the requirements of this section. I have always doubted the value of safety strops because of the amount of energy built up after the failure of the primary strop. The main rule I've always followed is no one works in the bite of a working rope or the hauler operator exercises care when men are under ropes. I feel this section does not apply to logging but has been taken from the boiler, cranes and lifts guide.

It is hard to make hard and fast rules about stropping logs. Breakerouts should always expect a log to end for end and no log should be landed while there is danger of an end for end on the landing.

SECTION 18

There is no standards for radio systems in the code and I have always felt there should be. This subject was brought up a number of years ago by the Loggers Association and the Labour Department said it was for the Post Office. The Post Office was only interested in allocation of frequencies.

The only comment I would make on the Transport Section is that logs are not properly secured and someone is going to be killed by a log coming off a truck.

The Bush Safety Code should be a valuable manual for loggers and contain more positive guidance for that competent person it now places so much store on.

Investigations of accidents should be carried out by a panel consisting of Bush Inspectors and personnel who are currently doing the work involved in the accident.

For those who think the present code is too large, I have here the Oregon State Code of Safe Logging Practices.

