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Forest Industries Road Transport Code of Conduct

highway, or the truck they are following carrying forest products.

Abstract

The Forest Industries Road Transport Code of Conduct is a code LIRO has developed to ensure that companies and people employed in the transportation of forest products understand the importance of projecting a professional, safe, and efficient industry to the general public. The problem the industry has in portraying a professional image, is that the general public are difficult to communicate with. They generally have a very poor understanding of the forest industry, the constraints and efforts (some imposed and others voluntary) made, and the vast contribution in economic, environmental, and employment benefits the average New Zealander receives.

All these benefits are difficult to communicate when the primaries interface the public has with the industry is the row of trees they see as they travel down the

As the carriers of forest products are so readily identifiable from other carriers, and because the volume of forestry traffic is so high, in specific regions, the New Zealand Forest Owners believes that the industry has an opportunity to positively influence public perception of the industry.

The Responsibility of the Forestry Road Transport Industry

Many within the forestry industry are concerned with the image the forestry road transport industry is projecting to the New Zealand public. There is an industry wide concern that insufficient advantage is being taken to improve its image and safety record. Even worse, the transport industry may be giving the forest industry a bad name. The public views trucks, especially log trucks as "big hairy monsters" with which they would

prefer not to share the roading network. The public is frightened by large commercial vehicles. The highlights from a recent Canadian study on the public's perception of large trucks (Prentice, Oakley, Hilderbrand) found that 41% of drivers said that large trucks normally caused them concern on the open road, female drivers were more concerned about truck safety than male drivers, and that level of concern increases with age. When the drivers were asked to identify their concerns in respect to trucks on the road, they identified 38 different items. Their top three concerns were:

1. Trucks travelling to fast
2. Unable to see around them
3. Having uncovered or unsecured loads

Thirteen of the 38 safety concerns related to drivers. The top three driver related concerns were:

1. Driving to fast
2. Following to close
3. Falling asleep at the wheel

53% of drivers reported being "very much concerned" or "would not pass" a truck on a two lane highway in wet conditions. This dropped to 25% on a dry road.

Although this survey was conducted in Canada, a similar list was compiled at the 1993 Road Transport Association annual conference. The logging section meeting identified factors that both contribute and detract from our industries public image. The factors identified that contribute to a good public image were:

1. Ride in a truck day.

2. Simulators in shopping malls (used in Australia).
3. Clean & tidy well lit vehicles.
4. Courteous drivers.
5. An appearance of well loaded vehicles with secure loads.
6. Publicity in various media.
7. Driver training.

The factors identified that detract from our public image were,

1. Speeding trucks.
2. Trucks dropping bark, stones & wood chips.
3. Truck accidents.
4. Trucks tailgating cars.
5. Trucks travelling in convoys.
6. Trucks using passing lanes and not allowing other faster traffic to pass.
7. Damage caused to the roads.
8. Diesel smoke & dust.
9. Engine brakes being used in built up areas.
10. Trucks rattling especially when unladen.
11. Hours of operation.

When looking at the above lists the causes of concern, which in some manner detract from our public image, can be summarised as: Large vehicles, operating at high speeds, with uncovered loads, working long hours, often in wet weather conditions and creating a large amount of spray that makes them difficult to pass. Additional concern can be created in the minds of other road users, and will damage our public image if vehicles are operated in a discourteous and inconsiderate manner. A list here would include: Noisy, dirty vehicles dropping bark and stones on the road; travelling to fast for the conditions, tailgating other vehicles, and causing congestion.

The vehicle description that causes concern is a fairly accurate description of a typical logging truck or vehicle used in the transportation of forest products, and is something we have very little control over. It is hoped that the driver description is not an accurate description of the way the vehicles are operated, but the fear is that most forestry truck drivers do not understand the role they have to play in portraying a professional, safety conscience industry image to the public. Nor do they realise the potential for good, or harm, they possess. They can be described as being the ambassadors, or the Achilles heel, of the New Zealand Forest Industry. The "Forest Industries Road Transport Code of Conduct" is a code that will make the drivers aware of the responsibility they have in the way they operate their vehicle.

Our cause is not helped by the media and public's insatiable thirst for the dramatic and controversial news. As recently as this last Easter break we had reported in every newspaper and on every news broadcast, "Logging Truck Kills Five People". It was a logging truck involved in this accident, the disappointing feature was that it was identified as a logging truck, even more disappointing, was weeks later when it was reported much less conspicuously the truck driver (notice, not log truck driver) was not a fault and had no way of avoiding the accident.

Challenge Presented By An Expanding Forestry Resource

The exposure the industry has to such an accident occurring again, with all the

publicity is increasing dramatically because of:

1. Increasing product volumes requiring a larger number of vehicles to be used in the transportation of forest products.
2. Increased congestion on the roads caused by other road users.
3. New forests tend to be more isolated and remote, with a roading network of poorer quality than we have used in the past.

With new forests coming on stream, production will increase from the present 15 million m³ to 23 million m³ over the next 15 years. One inevitable side effect of this increased production will be a marked increase in the number of vehicles transporting logs, and finished product to the market. It has been estimated that log transport alone will increase on Local roads by 127% and State highways by 33%. The total increase on both local and state highways from 1990 to the year 2000 will be 43%. (Forestry Road Funding Task Force 1993) In addition to these increases, further large increases are projected early next century. Similar increases in the transportation of finished product can be expected.

With a 127% increase occurring on local roads, the forestry transport industry will indeed become a very visible industry. The forestry transport in the past occurred predominantly in places like the Central North Island, where the population is less dense, and with trips tending to be shorter and heading towards a local processing facility, or a wharf. This transport activity also occurred in communities

where a forestry culture exists amongst the resident population, with many of the local people having carriers in the forest industry. The big increases in use of local roads by forestry traffic will occur in: Tasman, Gisborne, Wairarapa, and Northland. The big increases in logging traffic on both local and state highways will occur in: Whakatane, Gisborne, Rodney, and Northland. In these areas the forestry transport industry will conflict with other primary industry road users more such as tourism, farming, and recreation industries.

Overseas trends indicate that public pressure can be expected to bring about either the removal of trucks from the public roading system or the imposition of stringent regulations effecting the efficiency of the present system. This was demonstrated recently in Australia with the multiple Bus/Truck crashes on the Hume highway. The resulting backlash against the transport industry and tourist operators brought about a knee jerk reaction from the bureaucrats (who were probably more interested in securing votes at the next election than vehicle safety) forcing unwanted and ineffective legislation to be introduced. The New Zealand Forest Road Transport Industry is as vulnerable as the Australians were with the concentration of trucks we have in high use areas. Look for example at the Rotorua to Mount Maunganui highway and some other highways that will soon be servicing the new forests being harvested, especially around processing facilities or ports.

Pressure against the forestry road transport industry can be expected come from New Zealand's regional councils,

who were required to prepare their own transport strategy to:

1. Identify the future land transport needs of the region;
and
2. Identify the most desirable means of responding to such needs in a safe and cost effective manner, having regard to the effect the transport system is likely to have on the environment;
and
3. Identify an appropriate role for each land transport mode in the region., including freight traffic, public passenger transport, cycling, and pedestrian traffic;
and
4. State the best means of achieving the objectives referred to above

In all the regional councils strategies they were required to examine, and in most cases they recommended a modal shift away from Road Transport. Whatever the practicalities, a modal shift away from road transport is normally encouraged by the "public".

If the Forestry Road Transport Industry is to remain, unregulated as it is now, we must first demonstrate that we are capable of operating a safe, efficient, and professional industry. This must happen in order for us receive favourable consideration in the future with perhaps larger vehicles being operated on heavy transport routes,

The aim of this code is to have the Forestry Road Transport Industry portraying to the public a professional,

courteous, and safety conscious industry. This contact with the public at the road transport interface will have a good influence in improving the public's awareness and acceptance of the forestry industry.

The objectives are;

1. *To ensure everyone employed in the transportation of forest products by road understands the importance of portraying a professional and courteous industry.*

This code calls for a total commitment and joint effort by all people involved in the industry. Failure to cooperate by even a small number of individuals has the potential to undermine the entire efforts made by all others.

2. *To identify and minimise the adverse effects of operating vehicles employed in the forestry road transport industry.*

All equipment or practices must be examined to see if alternatives can be used that reduce the impact or effect of the transportation of forest products on both the environment and other road users.

3. *To identify and encourage activity or use of equipment that portrays a level of professionalism, safety, and consideration to other road users and the environment by those employed in the forestry road transport industry.*

Any equipment or practise that can be utilised to reduce the "effects" from vehicles used in the transportation of forest products must be identified, their use encouraged, and or work practise employed.

4. *To promote the safe use of vehicles.*

As trucks employed in the transportation of forest products are easily identified, any accident involving one of these vehicles is naturally associated with the forest industry, often attracting a high level of negative exposure by the media. This code will promote the safe, efficient considerate, and courteous use of these vehicles.

5. *To provide the forestry companies with operating guidelines.*

The Code of Conduct will provide the forestry companies with operating guidelines to encourage good driver conduct and use of equipment that portrays a professional and courteous industry consistent with the efforts made by other sectors in the forest industry.

The code is not a driver training program, although it does support driver training, and in the preparing this code we have observed driver training in practise and have been very impressed with the commitment to training, the course content and the co-operation shown by the drivers.

The code will inform the driver of expectations, in the way they operate their vehicles and the image they are projecting to the public. It is expected that a copy of the code will be kept in the cab of all vehicles transporting forest products by road. A list of the sections includes,

1. *Introduction*
2. *Aims and objectives*

What this code of conduct hopes to achieve

3. Pre trip vehicle inspection.

Daily, weekly and monthly vehicle inspection routines to ensure the vehicle and all its ancillary equipment is safe and available for use. This also includes a safety equipment check, and checks drivers are expected to perform during each trip.

5. Drivers Responsibilities

This section personalises the regulations in making the driver aware of their legal requirements by combining both the Occupational Safety & Health's transport safety code for bush undertakings, and the Land Transport Safety Authorities road transport regulations.

6. Safeguard Driving Techniques

This publication has many practical techniques drivers can use for the safe and efficient use of their vehicles. (Used with permission from Commercial Driver Training)

7. Company Policy

This section provides a place for the forestry companies to place any site specific requirements they may have, and also endorse the code. It is expected that transport operators will also place their own information in this section.

Conclusion

The forestry road transport industry must realise, and capitalise, on the potential for

the good they have, in projecting the benefits of forestry to the general public. We must demonstrated to the public and the regulatory authorities that we are a responsible industry. Until this is done, there will not be any relaxation in the present regulations. Failure to do this will, in the future, bring about restrictions and regulations that will have a drastic effect on the efficiency of both the forestry industry and the road transport industry. The Forest Industries Road Transport Code of Conduct cannot achieve this by its self. It will require the commitment from the Forest Owners, Transport Operators, to project to the public that we are a professional, safe and courteous industry.

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