



## Timber Harvesting Fatalities in Kentucky: 1994-2000

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Logging remains a difficult and dangerous occupation. It is important for operations to have safety plans that ensure all members are well trained, understand their responsibility for safety, and use practices (such as those described in the OSHA regulations) that provide for their own and others safety.

Information on logging fatalities has been collected by the Kentucky Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Project and evaluated by the Department of Forestry at the University of Kentucky since 1994. This fact sheet summarizes that information and is provided to increase safety awareness in Kentucky's logging industry.

### Total Logging Fatalities On the Decline

As shown by Figure 1, fatalities in Kentucky's logging industry have declined since 1994. While this trend is good the logging industry still has a high fatality rate compared to many other industries.

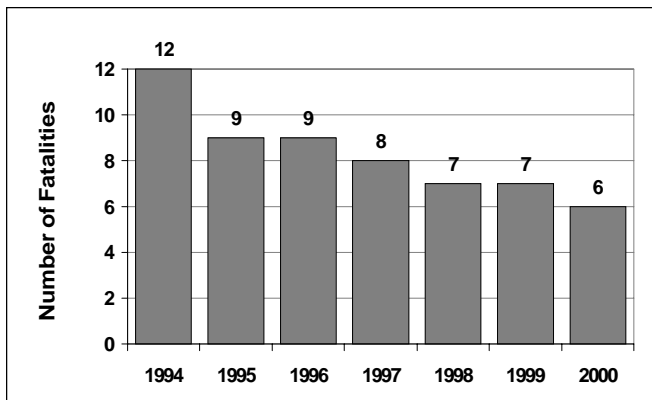


Fig. 1. Overall Logging Fatalities in Kentucky 1994-2000

### No Decline in Felling Fatalities

While total fatalities have declined since 1994 the number of fatalities associated with felling operations have not. Figure 2 indicates that tree felling continues to be the most hazardous job during the logging operation. The diagram indicates that the total fatalities which resulted

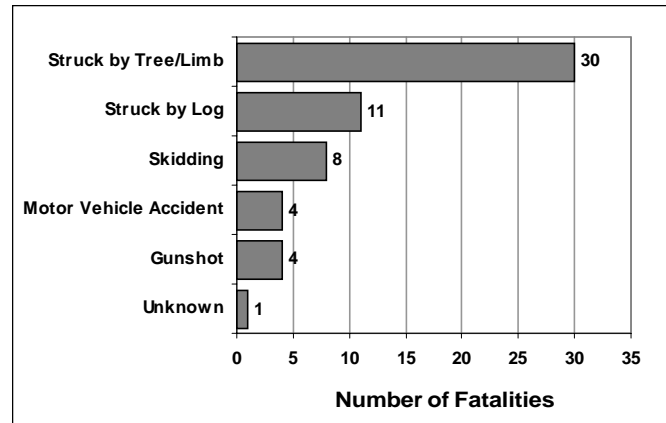


Fig. 2. Types of Logging Fatalities 1994-2000

from being struck by a tree or limb are more than all of the other types of logging fatalities combined over the six year period.

### Monthly Fatalities

This figure shows average monthly fatalities from the last 6 years by month. Note that the diagram indicates the peak months are June, July, August, September and October. This could be attributed to the fact that logging activity increases during these months in addition to the higher temperatures that cause fatigue which is a key factor contributing to accidents and injuries.

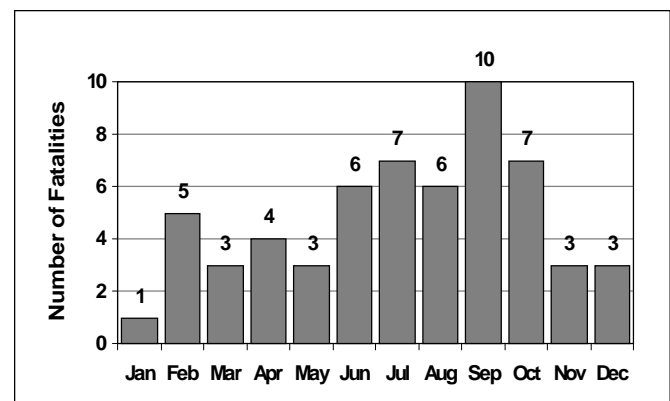


Fig. 3. Monthly Distribution of Logging Fatalities 1994 - 2000

## Summary of 2000 Logging Fatalities

Although we can not know the actual sequence of events that lead to a fatality, we can try to learn from the circumstance surrounding these incidents. Investigations of these fatalities identified critical factors that may have increased the likelihood or severity of an incident.

### Struck by Limb or Tree

- A feller was cutting down a tree and failed to notice that a fallen tree was resting against the tree he was working on. His actions dislodged the fallen tree which fell and struck him. **Recommended action: Each danger tree shall be felled, removed or avoided. Each danger tree, including lodged trees and snags, shall be felled or removed using mechanical or other techniques that minimizes employee exposure before work is commenced in the area of the danger tree** (from OSHA Reg. 1910.266 (h)(1)(vi)).
- A feller was cutting down a tree which started to fall and hit a second tree nearby. This second tree hit the feller in the head. He was transported to the University of Louisville Hospital where he died five days later. The feller was not wearing a hard hat at the time of the accident. **Recommended action: The employer shall provide, at no cost to the employee, and assure that each employee who works in an area where there is potential for head injury from falling or flying objects wears head protection meeting the requirements of subpart I of Part 1910** (from OSHA Reg. 1910.266 (d)(1)(vi)).
- A 73-year old male logger was killed when he presumably was struck on the head by a branch of a falling tree. The skidder was attached to the base of a tree that had been cut, but was still standing, nearly vertical, hung in the fork of another tree. He was pulling the base away from the stump so that the tree would fall to the ground. The 73-year old logger was watching, waiting for the tree to come down so that he could begin trimming away the branches. Once the tree hit the ground the skidder operator began looking for his partner but could not find him. He eventually found the logger unresponsive, slumped forward on his knees, in the branches of the fallen tree. He apparently had been hit on the head by one of the branches of the falling tree and was pronounced dead at the scene by emergency personnel. **Recommended action: No employee shall approach a mechanical felling operation closer than two tree lengths of the trees being felled until the machine operator has acknowledged that it is safe to do so** (from OSHA Reg. 1910.266 (h)(1)(v)).
- Two felling fatalities were reported without sufficient details to make recommendations. In either case it was not clear whether OSHA violations occurred.
  - A feller was struck by a falling tree in the morning hours during a logging operation.
  - A feller was struck by a tree limb. The feller had been cutting trees in a logging operation earlier in the day. He was found lying next to his saw and a tree limb.

### Struck by Log Rolling Off Truck

- A logger was working in a remote area when he unhooked the log chain on the truck. One log rolled off the truck and struck the man in the head and another log rolled off and hit him in the chest. He was pronounced dead at the scene by emergency personnel. **Recommended action: Each tie down shall be released only from the side on which the unloading machine operates, except as follows: when the tie down is released by a remote control device; and when the employee making the release is protected by racks, stanchions or other protection the employer demonstrates is capable of withstanding the force of the logs** (from OSHA Reg. 1910.266 (h)(6)(viii)).

Copies of this publication and information on 2000 logging fatalities can be obtained from the University of Kentucky, Department of Forestry, Lexington, KY 40546-0073, request publication FORFS 01-01. You can also obtain this fact sheet by calling the Kentucky Master Logger Hotline at 1-800-859-6006.

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