

LOGGER RESCUE

BY NIELS DE HOOP, PHD



Logger Dana Hinkley points out a stunning fact: 95% of seriously injured loggers are FURTHER INJURED (or KILLED) IN THE PROCESS OF RESCUE.

Dana is a logger from New Hampshire and Maine who had a secondary career as a community fire & rescue chief. He has come to Louisiana a couple of times to teach the Logger Rescue workshop to Louisiana Logging Council members. I attended one of his workshops last year and found it VERY informative.

Dana explained that many loggers die of exposure or shock after the accident happened, rather than of the accident itself. Therefore, efficiency and timeliness are important.

Two of the biggest issues that arise after a serious logging accident are location and communication. The other loggers on the site are the ones who have the most knowledge of the situation. This is important to remember. When rescue people are called to a logging accident scene, they have very little knowledge of the specific terrain, road conditions, exact location, how badly the logger is hurt, the equipment, the trees, hazards, etc.



It is important that someone on the logging crew maintain control of a rescue situation. When emergency help arrives, they typically move everyone aside and take over. **NOT ON A LOGGING JOB!** Maintain control of who does what and who goes where. If an actual search for the injured person is in order, set up an incident command. All information goes through an incident commander, and no one does anything until the incident commander approves it. The incident commander stays in one spot and has everyone report to him.

If you need to call in a logging accident that will require a rescue crew to carry the victim out, explain to the 911 operator that 16 to 20 people will be needed. Six people carry the rescue basket while others follow nearby and rotate in constantly. EMT's will need to monitor the victim constantly. Very few emergency personnel understand that it will take this many people to successfully and safely carry out a rescue operation.

The logger is the only person who knows the machines well. If a machine needs to be moved or operated in an emergency situation, he should be the one to do it. The Jaws of Life tools don't work on logging sites. The logger has the knowledge and the tools.

If a helicopter is in order, the landing zone should be at least 100' x 100'. Use a GPS to relay the coordinates of the LZ. At night, shine lights on the LZ from all four corners. Don't be surprised if a rescue helicopter drops a "swimmer" and then leaves to get more fuel.

Sometimes, a lot of time can be saved by finding out when the firehouse meeting nights are at a fire station local to your job site. Explain where you are working and what equipment they will need to bring if an accident happens, such as a metal basket, not just a simple rescue board.

Know the height, weight, medications, religion, etc., of every worker.

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There are some things that most fire & rescue crews will do wrong, so a logger must be “very, very firm.” An important one is that if a back injury is suspected, rescue crews are typically trained to roll the victim on his side, tie a board to his back, and then roll him back over on his back. Dana explained that this is one standard that EMT’s and rescue people simply have wrong.

If the back is broken, this action will sever the spine every time. The proper action is to raise the victim about one inch and slide the rescue board under him.

Dana related a story where loggers, trained earlier by Dana, stopped the rescue crew and put the victim on the board themselves using the proper technique. They saved the victim from a lifetime confined to a wheelchair.

Dana has seen many broken pelvis injuries from slips and falls, especially with a wrench in the back pocket.

If searching for a missing logger who may be injured, look for a tree felled out of sequence. Work from the outside of a felled tree to the middle. The last thing you want to do is step on a tree or branch that may have a person under it.

Every logging job, even fully mechanized operations, needs a chainsaw on the job in case something goes wrong. It can be used in case a person is pinned under tree branches. Empty out the chain & bar oil tank completely and put biodegradable bar oil in it. Alternatively, use vegetable oil. Adjust the oiler to “low.” Regular mineral oil will infect any wounds if the saw is used near the injured worker. Also, keep an additional set of saw chaps to lay over the injured person when operating the saw near him.



Dana Hinkley demonstrates a cutting technique to free a pinned logger. Use biodegradable bar & chain oil or vegetable oil. Mineral bar & chain oil will add infections to an already-injured person.

Dana discussed and demonstrated several techniques for freeing a worker pinned by a tree or branch. If a chainsaw is used, it is important to use two people. One operates the saw while the “safety person” designates the limbs to cut. The sawyer cuts only if he agrees. This is done one limb at a time. In other words, each cut is an independent and new decision.

The things Dana teaches in one workshop are enough to make a book. When a logger rescue workshop comes to your area, I highly recommend that you take it, even the entire crew. You won’t regret the time spent.

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