

Lessons from Losses

Broken Access Steps Lead to Close Call

To help TPA members avoid accidents resulting in injury or damage to property, the Timber Bulletin, in association with Lumbermen's Underwriting Alliance, will publish details of actual incidents and what can be done to avoid such occurrences in the future. By sharing this information, TPA and LUA hope to make our industry as safe as possible.

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Background: The mobile equipment at this logging site is less than five years old, and maintenance and housekeeping are reviewed daily.

During the winter months, working in the dark is routine due to the longer work days. On this particular day, shut down occurred after 7:00 p.m. The temperature at the time of the incident was very cold, roughly -20 to -25 F. The skies were clear with a slight breeze. The job site is located approximately 30 to 45 minutes from the nearest town, and over one hour from the operation's home base.

Operators: The operator of the equipment is considered fully trained in operation of logging equipment, with most of his experience as a cut-to-length harvester operator. For the last ten

years, this individual has operated forwarders and processors, as well as having driven a truck.

Incident and/or Injury: The operator was working into the dark hours of night, felling a mixed stand of timber with a cut-to-length harvester. At the end of his work day, the operator was preparing to leave the cab of the machine. Being unaware that at some point during the work day/night the access steps had been broken off and were missing, he abruptly fell as he reached for the top step of the access ladder. As a result, the individual over-reached for the



An example of broken steps on mobile equipment.



This is an example of broken steps on mobile equipment where the ground-to-step height is stressed.



Steps in poor condition on mobile equipment may lead to problems.



Another example of extra steps being added to mobile equipment to improve access and maintenance (both sides of machine).



Review the access method to truck loads, truck loaders, etc., for the safety of the worker. Adding additional steps, chain boxes, etc. are all very user friendly and promote safe egress.



This is an example of additional steps added to mobile equipment for maintenance purposes.

missing steps, which caused this slip/fall incident. The individual was facing the machine and had a secure grip on the hand holds, allowing the worker to catch himself. The worker still suffered a serious bruise, but no lost time or medical attention was necessary.

Unsafe act and/or condition: The unsafe condition was the missing / broken steps, and the unsafe act was the operator assuming the steps were in place without actually seeing them. Some contributing factors may have included the following: the cold temperatures which caused the step material to fracture, lack of lighting around equipment when working and/or failure to inspect equipment after dark, stumps cut too high, rough terrain, etc. The following suggestions can help prevent problems of this nature when working with mobile equipment.

Preventative Measures:

1. Always be sure of the access steps and have a secure grip on hand holds when entering and exiting the operator cabs of all mobile equipment. Use the three point positioning (two hands and one foot, one hand and two feet, etc.) whenever climbing onto or into mobile equipment.
2. Be alert to the surrounding terrain when operating, so the mobile equipment is not damaged (backing into trees, striking stationary objects, etc.).
3. When shutting down mobile equipment, complete an equipment inspection for maintenance problems, housekeeping needs, and broken or missing items. This is especially important when working after dark. Also, have

adequate lighting available to operate and view equipment.

4. Review all mobile equipment for safe access steps. In many situations it may be necessary to add more steps, hand holds, etc. even on newer mobile equipment.
5. Also, review these safety measures on your truck and trailer units as drivers secure their loads, access loaders, etc.

The enclosed pictures involve mobile equipment and truck egress examples that may also affect your operation. Also, as our trails come together this working season, please take the time to share new ideas/close calls/etc. This valuable information is a great tool that is user friendly for the logger, mobile equipment operator, and woods trucker!