

Lessons from Losses

Vandalism Strikes a Cut-To-Length Harvester

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 involved in this fire situation was a harvester with 9000 operating hours. Maintenance and housekeeping were rated as good. Large scale maintenance is normally handled by the appropriate equipment dealer. No immediate maintenance problems were present prior to this fire emergency. This equipment was last power-washed in the fall before freeze-up. The night before this incident this piece of equipment was cleaned by hand in the engine, hydraulic and boom area.

The day before this occurrence the weather was beginning to change with a fast approaching snow storm that produced approximately two inches of snow at this location. The temperatures were mild but freezing overnight and the wind was from the NE. In arriving in the early morning hour's, snow was still falling.

This fire situation occurred in the woods approximately 26 miles from the nearest town. The equipment was parked next to a dead-end forest road approximately two miles from the main road.

The owner/operator of this equipment is considered fully trained in operation. This individual has operated logging mobile equipment for roughly 23 years.

Incident: At first light this equipment was found completely burned in the engine, hydraulic, boom and cab areas. The snow



Cut-to-length harvester destroyed by vandalism

was still falling from a small snow storm that dropped approximately two inches of snow over night.

Leading up to this incident, the owner had worked this particular timber sale most of the winter and was preparing to move to another timber sale this spring. The next sale had been opened and the up front payments made. At the current timber sale site there had been some traffic with the roads being snow plowed, but no problems were noted. It had been a practice to lock all mobile

equipment and park off the roadways over night and on weekends. In pre-planning his move he had snow plowed a turn around, allowing room for safe loading of equipment. In this particular situation the involved equipment was moved to the roadway the night before, cleaned, and prepared for the move the next morning. Workers did not leave this site until some time between four and five o'clock in the afternoon. In arriving the next morning when the loss was discovered, the sheriff was

immediately called due to physical evidence that the machine had been tampered with and debris was thrown out in the immediate area. Evidence was collected by the local sheriff's department and the investigation is currently active. This rear access door to the engine compartment was left open and evidence of starting a fire was present. The engine, hydraulic, boom, and cab areas were completely destroyed, however, there was salvage value in the track system and processing head.

This truly is an act of vandalism! Always follow safe vandalism practices every time, all the time in high hazard areas known to be problems. The following suggestions can help prevent problems if work is required in these areas and others.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

1. Restrict vehicle access to job sites during off-hours to protect equipment. Use a gate, boulders, dirt berm, or a drag of trees to stop traffic.
2. Use private access to timber sales when possible.
3. Use terrain or standing trees as a barrier or visual screen to prevent random roadside shooting or equipment tampering when harvest site is adjacent to traffic areas or ATV trails.
4. Remove keys, lock doors, and turn off master switches when leaving the job overnight. Additional master switches for electrical and fuel systems can be added for backup and security.
5. Lock fuel, oil, and engine compartments to prevent tampering. Add locks if they have not been installed from the factory.
6. Park equipment away from ignition sources. Stay back from slash piles that could be ignited. Space equipment at least 50 feet apart to reduce chance of fire spreading from one machine to another.
7. Don't leave equipment unattended in an unsecured location for long periods of

time. Check on the status of equipment during off days when feasible. In high-risk situations consider having someone stay at the harvest site.

8. Service trucks and log trucks should be taken home or to another secure location over night and weekends when possible.
9. Consider using hidden motion activated cameras to record movement in and out of the job site. Using signage on

equipment indicating video surveillance discourages vandals.

10. Install an on-board fixed self-suppression system on all mobile equipment. Additional protection is always very beneficial in a fire emergency situation. Always follow the owner's maintenance manual for service and inspection of these systems. This is a very important factor in the performance of this protection.

TPA Members Help Complete Habitat for Humanity House



Dozens of volunteers, including TPA members, grabbed hammers to complete a new 1,100-square-foot home for Kellie Ritz and her daughter to move into. The six-month collaborative project was designed to ensure the Habitat for Humanity home was built using products from well-managed forests. Among those participating were TPA board member Cliff Shermer, who harvested the timber from the tree farm of Minnesota State Sen. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook). Ainsworth Engineered made some of the wood into OSB, and TPA member East Dhu River Sawmill in Mountain Iron donated its processing facilities to saw lumber and trim for the home. Also donating building materials were Lake States Lumber, Louisiana Pacific, Marvin Windows and other Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Initiative program participants. Those making cash donations to the project were Boise, Inc.; Forest Capital Partners, LLC; NewPage Corporation; Sappi Fine Paper North America; UPM, Blandin Paper Mill; and Verso Paper, Sartell Mill.

The project was spearheaded by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative's Minnesota Implementation Committee.

"This new home started with the harvesting of northern Minnesota trees, which were then made locally into forest products, which provided materials for constructing the home," said SFI Implementation Committee chair Terry Worthman. "Then we started the cycle all over again by replanting the harvested areas."