

DECEMBER **2021** ISSUE
VA Loggers Association
NEWS & UPDATES



Virginia attorney general-elect Jason Miyares (R), governor-elect Glenn Youngkin (R), and lieutenant governor-elect Winsome Sears (R)

**RECENT VIRGINIA ELECTION RESULTS
SUGGEST A NEW DIRECTION!**

VLA





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*Special thanks to our VLA Members for Bringing our
New members!*

Recruitment supports the heart & soul of our future!
Bring a new member today!

Happy Holidays

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 11-13, 2022
CLA Annual Meeting

April 29 - 30, 2022
Mid-Atlantic Logging & Biomass EXPO

May 20 -21, 2022
Richmond Logging EXPO

August 11-14, 2022
VLA Annual Meeting at Williamsburg Lodge

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Frank Myers

In 2009, then President Barack Obama told Republicans that “elections have consequences.”

Now that the dust has settled on Virginia’s recent election, Governor-elect Glenn Youngkin can say the same. Not only did Republicans sweep the statewide ticket for the first time since 2009, but the party also picked up 7 House seats for a 52-48 majority in that Chamber. While the Democrats still hold a 21-19 majority in the Senate, the recent showing for the GOP has bolstered their hope for enough Republican pickups to seal their majority when they run in 2023.

So, what happened in Virginia to cause this Red Wave? In my opinion, it’s what is happening in Washington, D.C. that started the tsunami. Regardless of your party affiliation, the gridlock in the nation’s capital compounded by inflation at a 30 year high, fuel and food prices soaring, supply chain breakdowns, and the never-ending pandemic have impacted your daily life. In essence, Virginia’s election was the first referendum on the Biden presidency, which seems to be taking a hard and unsustainable turn to the left. Adding to this national picture, the turmoil over parents not having a say in what is being taught in Virginia’s public schools pulled enough votes from blue suburban localities in Loudoun, Chesterfield, and Henrico counties to give Youngkin and his ticket a victory.

Finally, voter turnout was exceptionally high. The electorate was energized. This is where you, our members and supporters, can make a difference. One of VLA’s goals is to educate our members on issues critical to our industry so in turn, you can advocate on our behalf. Political involvement is the key to ensuring the future of logging in our state and our country.

As we look ahead to the New Year, it is clear Virginia voters wanted change. The Republicans now have the reins – let’s see if they can deliver.

Safe Logging,

Frank

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

WHAT IS IN OUR FUTURE?

Ron Jenkins



What should a trade association do as one year approaches its end and another one begins without pause! Without looking inward at ourselves, how will we know what worked and what did not! VLA looked back and is ready to move forward into 2022!

Virginia voters have also reflected, casted their vote, and decided to change the course in the future too. The results were overwhelming depending on your viewpoint. Going forward Virginia leaders will share a different vision for citizens with our top three publicly elected officials and a House of Delegates controlled by Republicans.

VLA does not have to face changes created by elections, but we will take advantage of opportunities created by them. We are working closely with our industry leaders to identify policy issues to make our industry healthier and stronger. We will offer these suggestions to Governor-Elect Glen Youngkin's transition team with an offer to collaborate closely with the new Governor to make Virginia an even greater state. Below are seven suggested policy changes.

- *Preserve Virginia's Right to Work status.*
- *Ensure state and federal tax conformity, including Virginia's Overtime Wage Act.*
- *Enact science-based, common sense environmental regulations in the areas of environmental justice, environmental permitting, and solar deployment.*
- *Remove environmental permit authority from citizen-appointed boards.*
- *Resolve Virginia Employment Commission issues impacting employers (particularly COVID-related claims).*
- *Repeal unnecessary regulations regarding COVID and heat illness within the Department of Labor and Industry.*
- *Treat biomass as a carbon-neutral, renewable source of energy.*

We also looked closely at the activities VLA members participated in throughout 2021 and decided to share a

quick summary with you:

- *Lobbied the Virginia General Assembly for industry.*
- *Staffed booth at the Richmond EXPO.*
- *Shared industry issues with Representative Abigail Spanberger.*
- *Convened a successful & well-attended VLA's annual meeting.*
- *Made requests to all County Board of Supervisors to exempt personal/M&T taxes on forest harvesting equipment – 13 counties agreed!*
- *VLA represented our industry at public hearings.*
- *Supported Log-A-Load for Kids events.*
- *Published five magazines.*

Now that we used hindsight to our advantage, we can begin to see our mission with clearer visions. Our findings show clearly that our most important goal is to serve you. So, we now ask you to review this past year and share your thoughts for our improvement. Please review and contact us with your ideas and suggestions to ensure we stay on mission.

We commit to stay focused on you and devote the energy and resources to help you. Below are six activities we believe to be important for us to be involved with in 2022. However, we would like your feedback to ensure our compass is pointing in the right direction.

- *Lobby Virginia's elected representatives and congressional delegation on important industry issues.*
- *Staff booths at Richmond and Mid-Atlantic Logging & Biomass EXPOs.*
- *Convene annual meeting (August 11-14, 2022, at Williamsburg Lodge).*
- *Recruit new members.*
- *Increase the VLA PAC fund.*
- *Communicate to members.*

Your input is always important to VLA. Let us know your thoughts!

Virginia's Governor-Elect Glenn Youngkin Signals Change

Glenn Allen Youngkin (born December 9, 1966) is an American businessman and politician who is the governor-elect of Virginia.

He is expected to be inaugurated as the 74th governor of Virginia on January 15, 2022. A member of the Republican Party, Youngkin defeated former Democratic governor Terry McAuliffe in the 2021 Virginia gubernatorial election. Prior to entering politics, he spent 25 years at the private-equity firm the Carlyle Group, later becoming its co-CEO. Youngkin stepped down from the Carlyle Group in September 2020, and announced his candidacy for the 2021 Virginia gubernatorial election in January 2021.

POLITICAL POSITIONS

On The Issues, a non-partisan organization that tracks candidates' positions, and is owned by Snopes, considers Youngkin to be a "Populist-Leaning Conservative" Republican. While running in the Republican primary, Youngkin pledged to "stand up against all of the legislation that has been passed by the Democrats" and to be an opponent of abortion. He describes himself as "pro-life" but says he supports legal access to abortion in cases of saving the pregnant patient's life, rape, and incest. Youngkin criticized the Texas Heartbeat Act, which bans most abortions after the sixth week of pregnancy, stating he instead favors a "pain threshold bill," which occurs around twenty weeks. Youngkin personally opposes same-sex marriage, but has said he would not interfere with the issue as governor. In an interview with the Associated Press, he said that he considers same-sex marriage "legally acceptable" and that "as governor, [he] would support [legal same-sex marriage]."



He spoke out against gun legislation that Democrats had passed, including expanded background checks, handgun purchase limitations and red flag laws. After winning the nomination, he de-emphasized these social issues, seeking to appeal to suburban swing voters. In July, he was caught on a hot mic telling an activist that he would limit his comments about abortion during the campaign so that he would not alienate independent voters. Also in July, the National Rifle Association (NRA) declined to endorse Youngkin after he declined to fill out their candidate survey. In September, a Democratic-aligned group began running ads in conservative parts of Virginia, seeking to diminish Republican turnout by attacking his lack of an endorsement from the NRA.

COVID-19

Youngkin supports the COVID-19 vaccine, but opposes mask and vaccine mandates. On November 19, 2021, he said, "I want to make it clear. On day one, I will rescind the executive order mandating that government employees have to get a vaccine and have to wear a mask." He also said he would rescind any mask requirements for school children.

TAXES

Youngkin supports eliminating the grocery tax, suspending the gas tax increase, offering a one-time rebate on income tax, doubling the standard deduction on income tax, cutting the retirement tax on veterans' income, and implementing voter approval for any additional increase to local property taxes, which the Associated Press has called the "most wide-ranging and detailed" plan of his campaign.

EDUCATION

Youngkin's education platform was identified as the centerpiece of his campaign by much of the national media. The Youngkin campaign opposed protections for transgender students in Virginia public schools and was against what Youngkin characterized as the pervasive teaching of critical race theory in the state. Politifact and PBS criticized these claims, saying they found no evidence that critical race theory was part of state curriculum standards and little evidence of it being taught in classrooms. Youngkin sought to mobilize voters on the issue of education by holding Parents Matter rallies. He also called for campus police to be stationed at every school in Virginia, following a sexual assault in a Loudoun County school. According to Politico, Youngkin "has hung his campaign on education", and The New York Times wrote that Youngkin's campaign turned Virginia public schools into "a cultural war zone".

CLIMATE CHANGE

Asked if he accepts the scientific consensus on the causes of climate change, Youngkin said he does not know what causes climate change and that the cause ultimately does not matter. He supports climate change adaptation efforts such as building additional seawalls. Youngkin would not have signed Virginia's Clean Economy Act (which calls for Virginia's carbon emissions to reach net zero by 2050) because he believes it would increase utility prices.



STRANGE DAYS

David Abbott. Managing Editor, Southern Loggin' Times

I have been getting more and more texts and emails from loggers I know throughout the South wondering why they haven't received the latest copy of Southern Loggin' Times. Seems there have been a lot of delays from the post office and mail has been later and later.

And those delays just seem to reflect the trend everywhere else in the world these days: everything is delayed. When I went to the Mid-South Forestry Equipment Show in Starkville, Mississippi in September—a show that had itself been delayed, like everything else, in 2020—I heard it over and over from equipment manufacturers, dealers, and so on: “We have all the orders we can handle; we just can't fill them. We're six months out on deliveries.” Everyone I talk to at every level of every industry I know of is facing shortages of everything they need to do what they do—from component parts to labor, packing materials to delivery drivers.

So is our pandemic economy good or bad? I read somewhere recently that the '80s was a bizarre decade because the economy was somehow booming and collapsing simultaneously. It feels kind of like that now. It's not that the economy is bad, in a traditional sense. It's more like it's so good that it's bad. The economy has become increasingly complex, and complicated to predict or to restart after the massive speed bumps of 2020. But it still comes down to the basics of supply and demand. Demand didn't go anywhere with the pandemic; if anything, it got higher. But supply went down and the bottleneck of supply chain disruptions is causing a domino effect. So when demand is high and supply is low, what we do we know happens? Prices go up, on everything. My family this fall has been in the market for a new (older) home and a new (used) car. Talk about sticker shock! Everything is more expensive. It's a weird economy and a weird situation all around, particularly on the labor market. I don't know if I'd say totally unprecedented or unique, but certainly outside the norm. Normally when we think of a bad economy we think of a lack of economic activity, a lack of jobs available. Unemployment is pretty low right now, but there are more jobs available, apparently, than people willing to fill them. I don't know that there's any single reason for that; some of it is all the stimulus money, but that's not enough to account for all of it, not even close. One aspect is that a lot more people than normal died in the last 18 months, and a lot of people have retired earlier than they planned. I still haven't found an answer that completely explains the labor shortage to my satisfaction.

So is the economy right now good or bad? As always, it depends on who you are and how you look at it. When I was a freshman in college, my political science professor said one thing that stuck with me: where you stand depends on where you sit. Where you stand on a given issue varies greatly with your perspective, your position in relation to that issue. So: if you're buying lumber right now, the price is terrible; if you're making and selling it, the price is great! I remember a year or so ago, people I know working in the oil industry in Texas and Louisiana were complaining about gas prices being too low and hurting their income. Now they're too high and hurting the rest of us!

Good markets and bad markets aren't one-size-fits-all; they don't impact everyone the same. There are always winners and losers; what's good for one is bad for another, and there's no way it can be great for everyone at the same time. We're buying a house and a car, but we're also selling a house and a car; it's good for us as sellers and bad for us as buyers.

For loggers? Seems to me like the ups and downs are the same old same old. Windfalls for others seem to blow right by us, but somehow, loggers always seem to make a way and keep on trucking, and that is something that has always amazed me about you guys. Excelsior!



Jerry Creighton, Research
Program Manager

THINNING IN LOBLOLLY PINE PLANTATIONS

Pine forests occupy only twenty percent of Virginia's forest cover but make up nearly half of annual harvest removals. Over two thirds of the pine forests are loblolly pine plantations. Each year landowners plant over 70,000 acres of loblolly pine seedlings. As those stands develop the individual trees will compete with each other resulting in reduced vigor, slower individual tree growth and higher risk of insect and disease damage. Appropriately timed thinning is an important tool for mitigating these impacts. There are several effects of thinning that make it a worthwhile option.

Forest Health

Foremost among the benefits of thinning is improved tree and overall stand health. Healthier trees and stands are more resilient when challenged by stressors such as rainfall or temperature extremes, competing vegetation or damaging diseases or insects. For example, thinning stands to reduce the basal area to 60 to 80 ft²/acre can maintain tree vigor and increase tree spacing is a proven tool for long term prevention of southern pine beetle.

Stand Growth

Thinning is also important for maintaining stand growth rates. A study conducted by the Virginia Department of Forestry and the Forest Modeling Research Cooperative (FMRC) at Virginia Tech tracked volume growth over 25 years in plots established at planting densities from 300 to 3000 trees per acre. Growth at higher densities begins declining as early as age ten whereas at lower densities it doesn't slow down until around age 25 or later. Thinning would be needed earlier in a denser stand in order to maintain growth rate. Site productivity is a factor here, as stands on better sites will reach this stage earlier than those on poorer soils.

Tree Growth

Lower stand density after thinning results in greater diameter growth on the trees left behind, which makes them more valuable for a solid wood (i.e. sawtimber) market. A study tracked since 2009 by the VDOF and NC State Forest Productivity Research Cooperative demonstrates the impact. At age 27 (12 years after treatment), the unthinned trees (Figure 1) average 9.5 inches in diameter and the plots have 200 tons per acre of pine fiber while plots thinned to 300 trees per acre (Figure 2) are 11.3 inches in diameter and would yield 130 tons per acre at final harvest in addition to the 30 tons per acre removed at thinning twelve years earlier. Thinning increases individual tree size and decreases stand yield at final harvest, but the financial value of the early cash flow (see below) and more valuable larger stems at final harvest offsets the reduced final volume yield.



Figure 1. Loblolly pine at age 27 that was planted at 500 tpa and never thinned.



Figure 2. Loblolly pine at age 27 that was planted at 500 tpa and thinned to 300 tpa at age 15.

Cash Flow

For landowners growing loblolly pine as a financial crop probably the biggest single reason to thin is early cash flow. Money sooner is worth more than money later. A financial analysis conducted by VDOF based on data from a study on state forest land and growth projections from the FMRC helps to understand the tradeoffs here (<https://dof.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/RR-132.pdf>). Figure 3 demonstrates how thinning increases both the maximum present value and the financially optimum rotation length – in this case adding \$25 per acre in value and extending the optimum rotation length from 18 to 23 years. The value added by thinning is greatest in a “sawtimber” market.

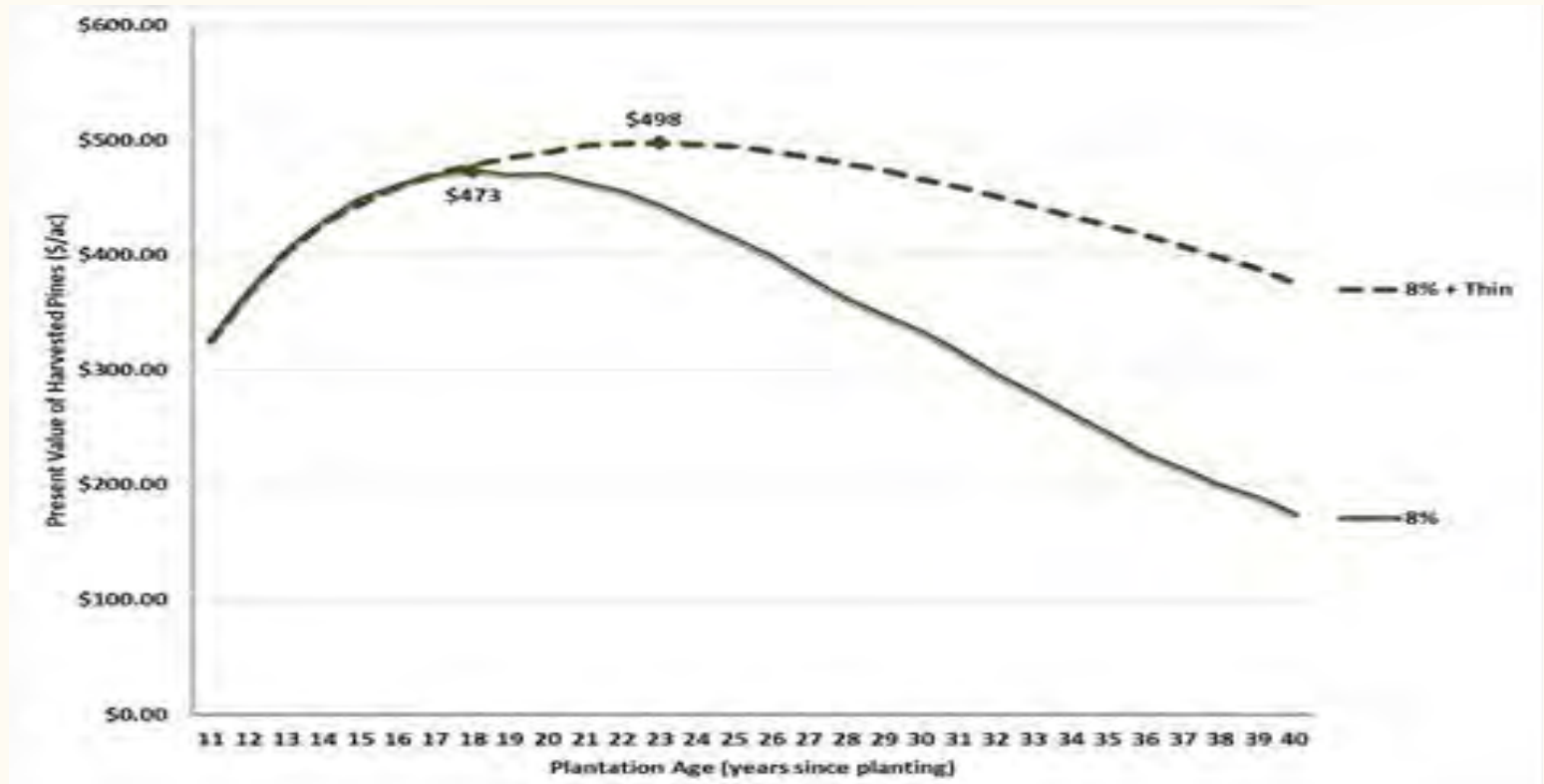


Figure 3. Present value (\$/ac) of a loblolly pine stand planted at 500 tpa with and without thinning assuming an eight percent discount rate.

So when is the correct time to thin and how much material should be removed? That depends, of course, on the product objective for the plantation, the existing markets at time of thinning, and the stand condition. On average, stands in Virginia are “ready” for thinning in their mid-teens. As a guideline, many foresters use a “trigger” basal area of around 140 ft²/ac as a measure of readiness to thin and a “target” residual basal area of 70 ft²/ac. Another estimator of the need for thinning has historically been the amount of live crown (Figure 4); when the trees in a stand approach 30 percent or less of their total height consisting of live crown thinning was judged to be needed. The most recent research recommendations have modified that metric to say that the correct threshold is 30 feet of live crown per tree, not 30%. Whatever trigger metric is chosen, it is critical to thin before the stand begins to decline because the trees will be less and less able to respond as time passes. Larger trees are able to respond well to thinning while smaller trees are unlikely to benefit, so thinning should remove as many small or defective stems as possible.



Figure 4. Thinned loblolly pine canopy with good residual crowns capable of rapid response.



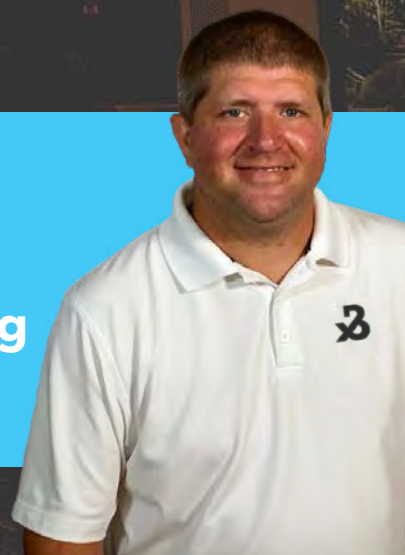
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VLA members reminded us that we are like a ship, sure of its destination and always pointed in the right direction. Thank you all for helping VLA navigate through the pandemic and crazy markets, keeping it upright, and moving forward.

We appreciate our loyal members and supporters!

May the good things in life be yours in abundance, today and throughout the coming year.

Seasons Greetings

*- VLA Board of Directors & Staff
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LEARNING FROM VIRGINIA LOG TRUCK CRASHES 2009–2019



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Virginia increased its gross vehicle weight limit (including tolerances) for log trucks to 90,000 lbs. in July of 2015. Many highway safety advocates argue that increasing weight limits lead to more crashes and increased severity of crashes. To evaluate whether Virginia's weight limit increase led to more crashes or more severe crashes, I analyzed crash data from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles for crashes involving log trucks between 2009 and 2019.

Crash Trends

Virginia's log truck crash rate increased by 85% between 2009 and 2018 before falling in 2019 (Fig. 1). Rising log truck crash rates in Virginia and elsewhere have contributed to rising log truck insurance costs in recent years. Reducing log truck crashes should be top of mind for logging businesses and other log truck owners.

Did the weight limit increase cause log truck crash rates to rise?

No. Virginia's log truck crash rate began rising before the increase in the weight limit and was more or less flat from 2015–2017, the years immediately following the increase (Fig. 1). In 2019, the rate of log truck crashes fell below the level observed prior to the weight limit increase.

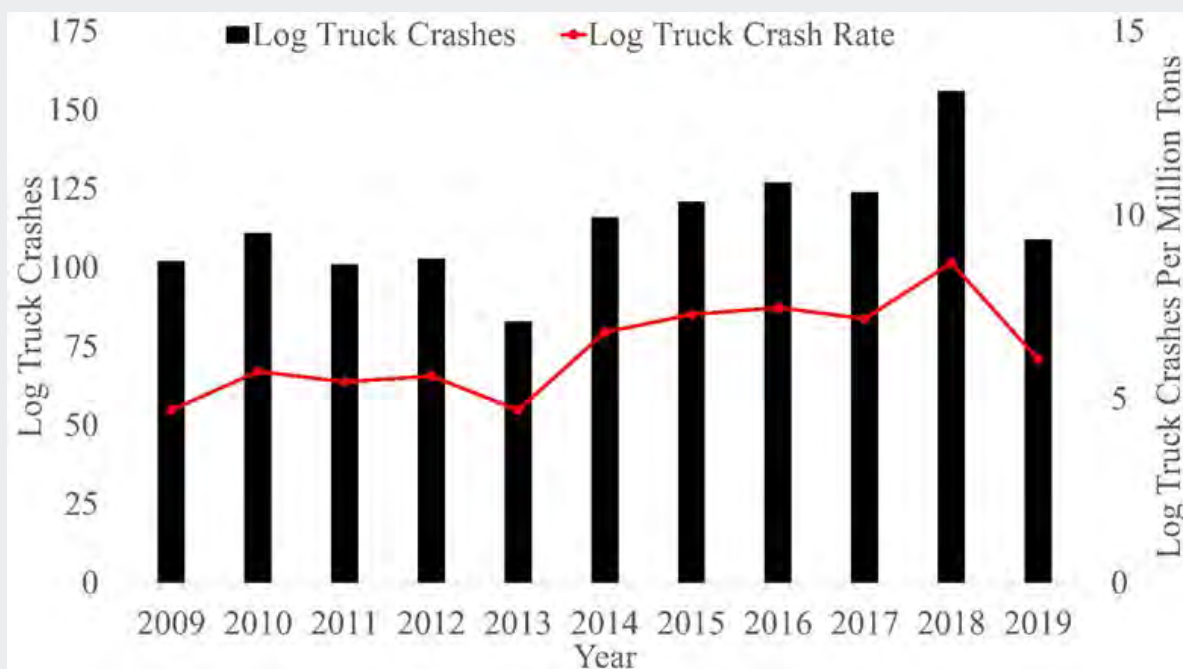


Fig. 1: Log truck crashes (left axis) and log truck crashes per million tons of timber harvested (right axis).

Did log truck crashes become more severe after the weight limit increase?

No. In the years before the weight limit increase, an average of 49% of log trucks involved in a crash were disabled by the crash, meaning they could not be driven from the scene. In the years after the weight limit increase, an average of 45% of log trucks were disabled. Prior to the increase in weight limits, log trucks involved in crashes experienced an average of \$10,136 of damage. In the years after the weight limit increase, log truck crash damage averaged \$8,552. Damage estimates were made by law enforcement officers responding to crashes. While these estimates may or may not be accurate, the methodology was the

same before and after the weight limit increase, making it a relevant comparison.

Why did log truck crash rates rise?

There was a relatively strong relationship between the number of crashes involving all types of vehicles in Virginia and the rate of log truck crashes (Fig. 2). Of course, crashes are complex events with multiple factors involved and it is impossible to demonstrate cause-and-effect from log truck crash reports. During this decade, Virginia's population increased by 500,000 people, annual vehicle miles traveled increased by approximately 6 million miles per year, and crashes by all vehicles increased by more than 10,000 per year. More people and more traffic led to more overall crashes, and it is little wonder that log trucks were collected in some of these crashes.

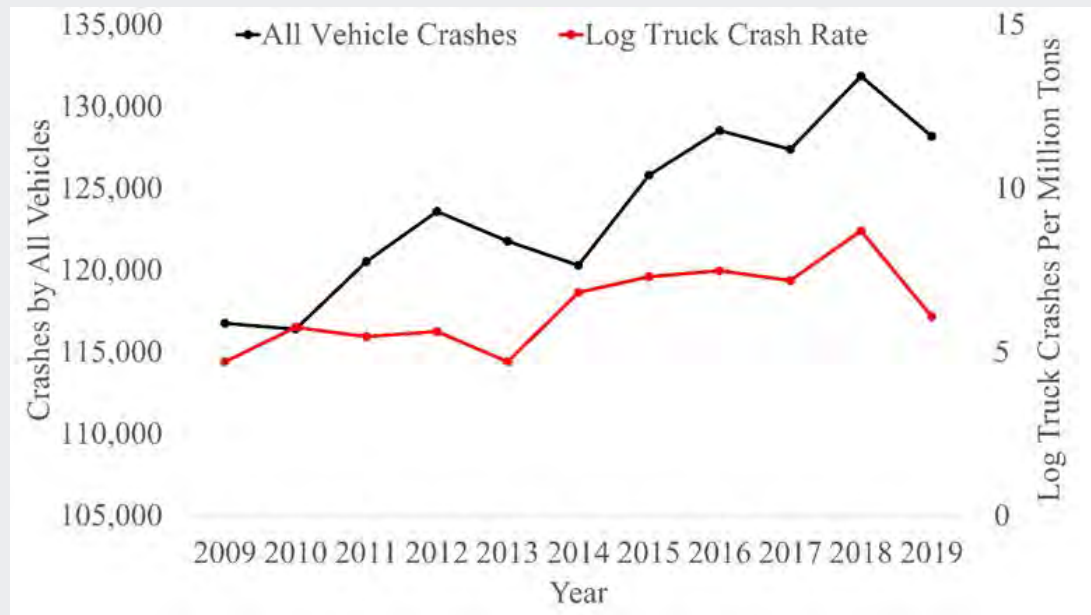


Fig. 2: Number of crashes by all vehicles (left axis) and log truck crashes per million tons of timber harvested.

Other Lessons from Log Truck Crashes

Log truck drivers were issued a summons in approximately half of log truck crashes. Drivers (log truck drivers and other drivers) are the most important factors in determining whether a crash occurs. It is tempting for log truck owners to assume that passenger vehicles are at fault in log truck crashes. While passenger vehicles are more likely to be at fault when a passenger vehicle and heavy truck collide, this is not always true. The high percentage of drivers issued summons suggests that continuing education for drivers, such as through TEAM Safe Trucking, would be beneficial for log truck drivers.

Failure to maintain control was the most common contributing factor to log truck crashes (Table 1). Exceeding the speed limit rarely contributed to crashes (<1% of crashes); however, exceeding safe speed was a top contributor to crashes. A driver may exceed safe speed without exceeding the speed limit if weather or traffic conditions make driving the speed limit unsafe. Following too closely was another common contributor to crashes and this is a leading contributor to log truck crashes in Georgia as well. Again, driver education may improve driver performance and prevent some of these crashes. Fortunately, fewer than one percent of log truck drivers were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the crash.

Table 1: Top five contributing factors to log truck crashes in Virginia 2009–2019.

	Contributing Factor	Percent of Crashes
1.	Failure to maintain control	24%
2.	Following too closely	6%
3.	Failure to yield right-of-way	4%
4.	Exceeding safe speed (not speed limit)	4%
5.	Avoiding other vehicle	3%

Log truck crashes occurred most commonly on dry roads (84%) during daylight hours (80%). Crashes were most

likely to occur on straight sections (68%) of roads with two-way traffic without a median (62%). Less than 10% of log truck crashes occurred on interstate highways. Only 18% of crashes occurred in urban areas. Crashes were distributed more or less evenly throughout the state with 46% of crashes occurring in the Piedmont, 33% in the Coastal Plain, with the remainder in the mountains (Fig. 3). In other words, log truck crashes occur where and when log trucks travel most often.

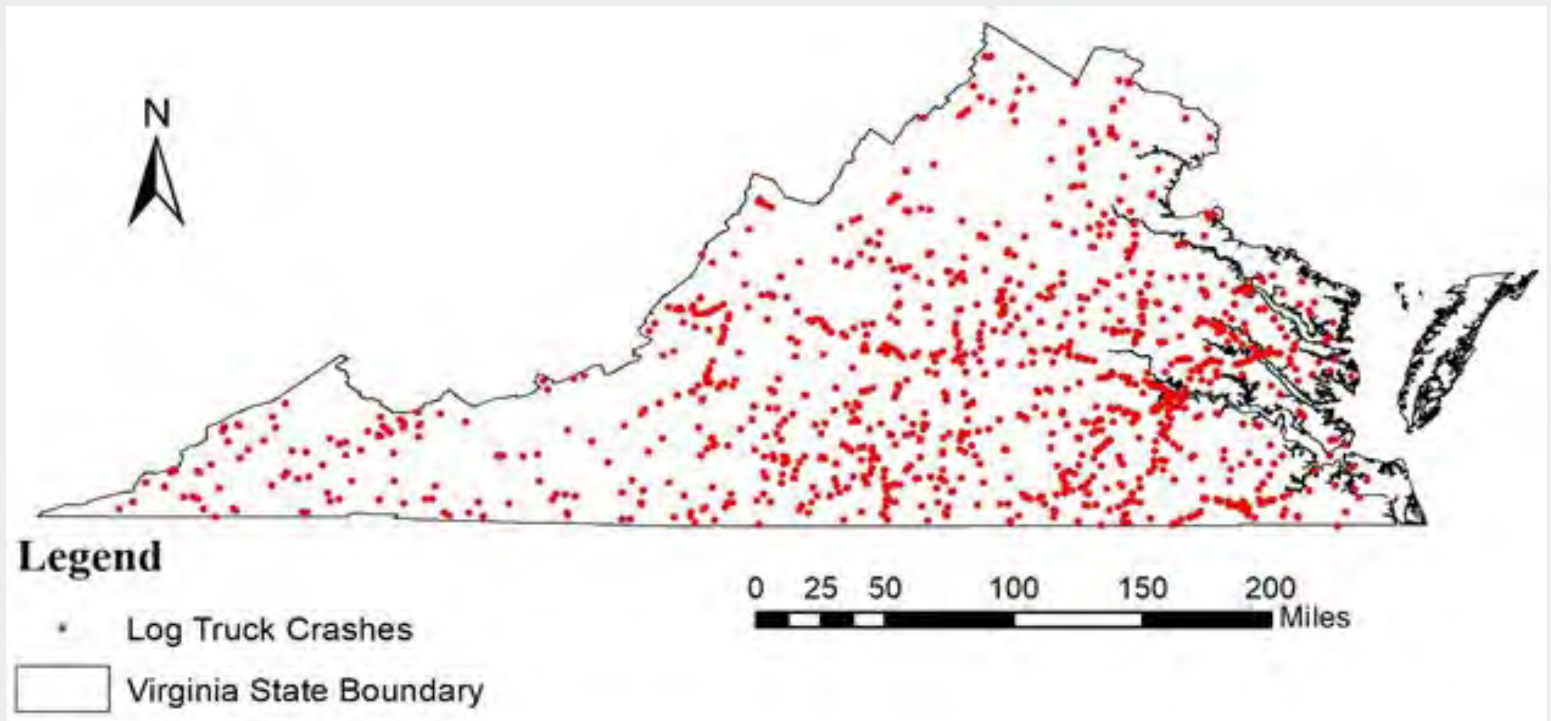


Fig. 3: Location of log truck crashes in Virginia 2009–2019.

The average age of log trucks involved in crashes was 14.4 years. Approximately 10% of log trucks involved in crashes had at least one mechanical defect, with brake and tire defects most common. These findings, and research in other states, suggests that crashes are concentrated among old and poorly maintained log trucks. This is not to say that new log trucks are not involved in crashes, but old and poorly maintained log trucks are involved in crashes at higher rates than newer and better maintained trucks. I suspect that VLA members do their best to operate safe equipment. Unfortunately, a few bad actors can tarnish the image and raise the insurance premiums of other log truck owners.

Conclusion

This review of log truck crashes shows that log truck crashes increased between 2009 and 2019, most likely because of a growing population and increases in distracted driving among drivers of passenger vehicles. Log truck crashes should not be considered a cost of doing businesses or a necessary evil: log truck crashes can be avoided. The increase in Virginia's weight limit for log trucks did not cause more crashes nor did it increase the severity of log truck crashes. This finding should inform discussions of weight limit increases in other states.

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AS WE SEE IT



~~THE ALC~~ ~~Mr. Smith~~ Goes to Washington.

BY: SCOTT DANE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AMERICAN LOGGERS COUNCIL

The National Voice for Loggers, the American Loggers Council has opened an office in Washington DC, one block from the White House.

The iconic movie, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, depicts a "common-sense", "small town", albeit naïve and politically unsavvy, Washington outsider going to D.C. In a sense perhaps the American Loggers Council can be likened to that Jimmy Stewart character, "Mr. Smith", who quickly discovers many of the shortcomings of the political process but remains steadfast in his values as he stands alone in an inspired fight against corruption and greed, ultimately succeeding in his political quests. It is likewise our intent to prevail.

Some may view the American Loggers Council, and the people that we represent, as "naïve" to the inner workings of the DC machine, but like Mr. Smith, in my 17 years of state and federal legislative work, I have found one simple formula for political success – forthright honesty. If elected and non-elected officials know that they can trust you and your message, then they are willing to work with you. Furthermore, for the most part loggers are respected within the halls of Congress, both right and left. Loggers represent hard working, "boots on the ground", "salt of the earth", "last of a breed" men and women who are admired within the denizens of the Capitol.

Additionally, relationships are the basis for both business and politics. ***The American Loggers Council represents the politics of business, particularly at the federal level. To establish and build these relationships you must be "where" this business of politics is conducted – Washington DC, not Gilbert, Minnesota.***

"The famous bank robber Willie Sutton was asked, "Why do you rob banks?" He replied, "Because that's where the money is."

Washington DC is where the money is, (at least you'd think so the way it is thrown around sometimes), but that is not actually why the American Loggers Council is establishing an office in DC. More importantly, Washington DC is where the laws, policies and decisions are made that affect your business and your "money".

It has been said: "If you are not at the table, you are probably on the menu."



The American Loggers Council wants to make sure that the timber industry has a seat at the table and is not on the menu, that is why we have opened an office in DC. This American Loggers Council office will be available to use for the members during their visits to DC as an additional benefit of membership (Please contact the Council in advance to schedule use of the office and its amenities during your visit in Washington DC).

Some may believe that the timber industry is Mr. Smith, but like him, naïve as it may seem, the American Loggers

Council believes that those in Washington DC still work for us, those who elected them. Therefore, the Council is prepared to be in DC: working to address the challenges and threats to the timber industry, establish relationships and solve problems. After all, the timber industry is a vital economic and environmental partner:

- *Post-Pandemic Recovery*
- *Rural Job Development*
- *Healthy Forest Management*
- *Wildfire Mitigation*
- *Carbon Sequestration*
- *Renewable Energy & Fuel*
- *Forest Products Production*

Absent a stable and sustainable timber industry, none of these economic and environmental benefits are achievable.

Healthy forests should not be a partisan issue. The American Loggers Council looks forward to working with our elected officials and government agencies in Washington DC to address the shared objectives and take advantage of the opportunities that the timber industry represents in achieving these benefits.



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FOREST PRODUCTS AND MARKETS VIRGINIA WOOD PRODUCTS UPDATE

Henry Quesada

Associate Professor
and Extension
Specialist

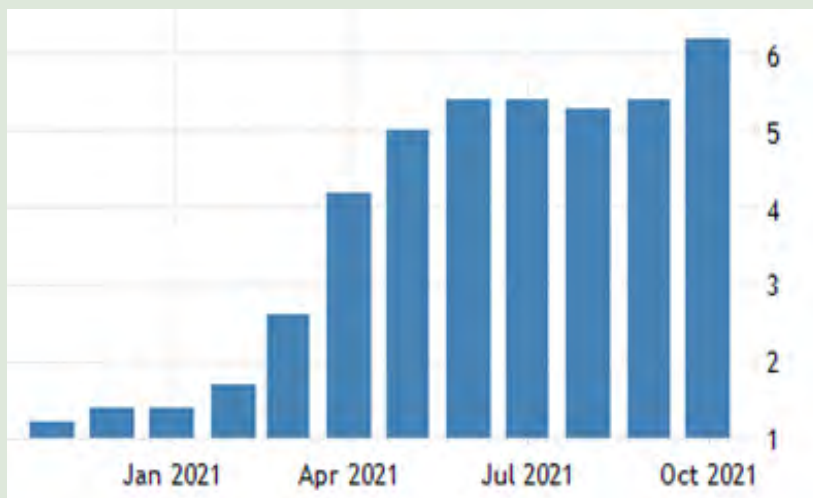
Department of
Sustainable
Biomaterial,
Virginia Tech

If you have any
questions about this
topic, please contact
Dr. Henry Quesada at
quesada@vt.edu.

SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS AND NOW INFLATION RATES. WHAT IS AHEAD FOR THE FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY?

Although the country seems to be on its way to recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, now industry and the general public face a new challenge: inflation rates. It was reported on November 10 that inflation hit 6.2%, the highest since 1990. Increases in gas, cars, housing, and food are the main contributors to this index. Main disruptions in the supply chain, shipping rates, labor shortages, exchange rates, manufacturing contraction, and an intentional reduction in the production of oil are the main drivers for the increase in prices.

Over the next 12 months families in the US are going to struggle to pay more for housing, services, food, and energy. This obviously is going to impact all industries and the forest products industry is not going to escape this next challenge. Many consumers will probably put on hold remodeling projects as the main focus will be on securing other critical needs. Purchasing of new homes will also be delayed until the economy signals a better situation. Bottom line, the next 12 months are going to be hard on many Americans, especially those in the lowest-income group who are going to spend about 36% of their income on food while for the highest-income families only 8% of their income will be spent on food.



US inflation rates. Source: TradingEconomics.com/US Bureau of Labor Statistics

What is ahead for forest products industries? The labor shortage that the country faces, 10.9 million vacant positions according to the US Bureau of Labor, is going to remain an issue for the next 2 or 3 years. Many forest products producers are seriously considering adding more automation when feasible as a strategy to overcome labor shortages.

Over the last 5 years, transportation in the forestry and wood products sectors was being impacted mainly by regulations and labor shortages but now the price of oil is putting more pressure on the supply chain with shipping costs increasing 43% by road or rail. The forest products industry needs to become very careful with their shipping decisions related to frequencies, consolidation and transportation mode. Those forest products industries in the export market (mainly hardwood products industry) are now seeing shipping rates increasing from \$3,100 (pre-COVID) to more than \$20,000 for shipping containers from New York to China. If you are in the business of wood products exports, this ridiculous increase might terminate or put a hold on your export business until better times arrive.

Shortages in the supply chain are also impacting the acquisition of new wood processing equipment and parts for repairs. Xiamen, a city in China, is known for its massive production of electronic components. The city went into lockdown because of COVID-19 and that has decreased manufacturing capacity of vital electronics needed for new equipment, cars, trucks, and parts for equipment. On top of this, finding qualified technicians remain a huge challenge and more often downtimes continue to increase.

We keep hearing reports that a few forest products businesses are gearing up for the next challenge. What about your company? How are you planning to mitigate risk from inflation rates and supply chain disruptions? Not an easy task but if you are running a forest product business you need to sit down and evaluate different alternatives for your business to successfully navigate these upcoming turbulent times.

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Henry [Quesada at quesada@vt.edu](mailto:quesada@vt.edu)

When I was first asked to write an article for the newsletter on being the wife of a logger, my first thought was that I could actually write a book, how do I go about condensing my thoughts to a single article... well here goes! First let me not only dedicate this article to my husband and family, but to all of you fellow logger families!

Through the Lens of a Logger's Wife

By Cheryl Morris, Loving Wife

Growing up the most I knew about what it meant to cut down trees was the fall season meant cutting firewood to prepare for the winter. I have fond memories of my dad, uncle, brother and men from our Church gathering on a cool autumn Saturday morning to cut firewood for my Grandma who lived across the road from us. In turn, she would prepare a table full of food to feed everyone for lunch; and yes, she did all of her cooking on a wood cook stove! It was both of my grandmas and mom who taught me to love cooking at a very early age. Such warmhearted and thankful memories of people helping people!

When I met Buck, he was playing music in the band at a wedding reception and it just so happened that I was a bridesmaid in that wedding! I reflect back on that Saturday in July 1990, a day I knew for sure that I had just met one terrific guy, a day that would change my life forever!

It didn't take me long to learn that not only was Buck a gifted musician, but his family operated a logging business. Buck's dad started Glen Morris and Sons Logging in 1962. At the time we met, Buck's dad, two brothers and he logged together and his mother kept the books; this was truly a family business in every sense of the word! Buck would log with his family during the week and play music on the weekends. I got to know Buck, his immediate and extended family and grew to love them very much.

Fast forward then to May 1996 when Buck and I were married. The day of our wedding, family and friends gathered for our day of celebration but guess who was not there? I bet you are thinking I was going to say Buck...Nope, the minister was missing! I remember just like it was yesterday that Buck came back to the room that I was waiting in and asked what we should do. This was a wonderful example of knowing that God is always in control! My Aunt who was playing the organ for us that day had recently married; I had not met her new husband, but guess what, he was an ordained minister and he married us that day! By the way, the original minister showed up during the reception, well after we had said "I do" and were pronounced husband and wife. We learned from the start of our marriage that when one plan doesn't work out, a better plan may be waiting in the wings!



Being part of a family owned business can be a blessing, but can also meet with many challenges and frustrations. Buck's father passed away in 2013, today it is just Buck and one of his brothers that run the business. Being a logger's wife means knowing that your loved one leaves home each day to go to a hard job, and while it can be very enjoyable, it can also be very dangerous. I do find comfort knowing that no matter if someone is having a bad day, they always watch out for one another in the woods to ensure no one gets hurt.

As I feel most of you would agree, owning your own business means rarely getting away from the business. You have to be able to return calls in the evening from prospective landowners and willing to take your weekends to go walk a tract of timber that may potentially be your next job site. Buck has been a tremendous asset to the family business in that he has been the primary person to make the timber deals with the landowner. He knows very little about the computer (*and I do mean very little*) but he is well versed in using the GIS Navigation App on his phone to look up plots of land that could be potential logging sites.

There have been times when I have chatted with friends about the logging business and the Codes and rules that have to be followed. They often find it surprising how regulated the logging industry truly is. I too have been educated about the logging industry throughout the years; on one occasion I remember overhearing Buck talking to someone on the phone about a "four-sided log." I could not figure out what in the world he was talking about as I always thought a log was round! When I asked him later what he was talking about, he laughed and proceeded to explain to me that logs are visually graded/inspected on four sides as well as both ends, this gives the inspector the information as to the quality of the lumber yielded from the log....who knew!

With the exception of occasionally going out to eat during the week, I prepare us an evening meal every day. This gives the two of us the opportunity to chat about our day and watch the evening news. I always ask Buck how his day was, hoping he will say they had a good day and got lots done. However, on days that he comes home smelling like diesel, hydraulic or some other type

of fuel almost always means they have had a line broken or some other type of breakdown. And looking at those greasy clothes means washing them several times to look half-way like the clothes have actually seen the inside of the washing machine! There are also days when I don't even have to ask how his day went, I just know by the look on his face! When it comes to breakdowns, some can be fixed that day, other breakdowns can really hamper their operations which can be quite frustrating. In addition, with any business in which trucking is part of the equation, there are times when the truck breaks down and generally as luck would have it, it always seem to happen when the trailer is loaded with logs! I often hear about, as I have to believe many of you hear the same thing, how the cost of doing business with the operational expenses continues to rise and what the future of logging will look like in the coming years.

The weather can also lend itself to being problematic at times; yes, mother nature can play a part in operations as well... too hot, especially if the air condition is broken in the equipment, too cold for the machinery to start early in the mornings, too rainy that it might create a mess for the landowner's property or too snowy/icy that can make being outdoors very hazardous. When they have to be off for a couple days though, Buck is generally chomping at the bit to get back to work; as for me, I just say, "enjoy your time off!"

Reflecting back, one of the times that I was probably worried the most was back in 2011 when we had the earthquake with the epicentre in Louisa County. I was working in Richmond that day in one of the buildings downtown when the earthquake hit; of course it was frightening not knowing quite what was going on and just the feeling of wanting to be back home. However, even more frightening was not being able to get in touch with Buck to ensure he was ok. I knew that they would surely have felt the impact of the earthquake where they were logging at and was imaging what kind of damage could have potentially happened. After numerous attempts and getting more and more worried, I finally was able to reach his mom. Thank goodness she had been in contact with him and they were all ok...what a sense of relief!



After working all day, most of us want to come home and relax for the evening, eat a good meal, maybe find something good on TV to watch and countdown to the weekend...not Buck! In the past year or so he has starting cutting firewood in the evenings and on weekends...a classic example of bringing your job home with you! Seriously though, I have found so much enjoyment being able to watch him out in the field cutting the firewood and sometimes lending a hand to help him stack the wood. He seems more relaxed and at peace cutting firewood than just about any other time. This past summer we also enjoyed several picnics outdoors using the logs for our table and chairs; I find it is often the little things in life that brings the most joy and happiness! I have also been very appreciative that for many years Buck has always made sure that my dad has had plenty of wood for the winter months. Dad has a furnace, but much prefers the warmth of the wood stove!

If I can offer a small piece of advice, it would be to please take time from your busy work life to spend time with your family; take a vacation, go out to dinner, or just take a drive through the countryside. With this past year and half dealing with the restrictions brought on by the pandemic, we have enjoyed taking drives through the countryside just to have a change of scenery. In the past, one of our favorite places to travel to is the Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg area, another memorable vacation was to Kentucky to tour the Ark, amazing and well worth the trip! Buck would probably say that one of his most memorable trips was going to California to see the Redwoods!

For those of you who know Buck, you know that he is not only an exemplary logger, but a very gifted singer and musician. This year I was so proud of him for completing a lifelong dream of his to make a country music CD. This project that he titled, "Give Her The Flowers" was such a wonderful example of not only having a dream but taking the initiative to follow your dream! The older country music songs are reflective of an era that he grew up in; he also took the time to write as he calls them, "liner notes" about each song and friends who inspired him along the way.

As I have been writing this article I have reflected on the many gifts and special moments that we have had in our marriage. I wanted to share a story that still remains one of my most cherished memories and gift from Buck. Several years ago my dad, mom and I were at a community auction in the area in which I grew up; of course most of the people there were friends that we knew. I believe the auction was either in October or November of that year, I do remember it was fall. All of the items for the auction were donated, as the proceeds would benefit the fire company and other community venues. One of the items in the auction was a quilt that my Grandma had made for one of her friends many years before that. By that time, my Grandma and the lady she had made the quilt for had both passed away. Knowing who made the quilt I was determined to buy it; however, so was a relative of the person to whom the quilt had been made for. We each kept bidding until I felt that I should stop. I had later told Buck about the quilt that I lost the bid on. Now, this wasn't a masterful heirloom quilt, it was a simple quilt but my Grandma had made it using her treadle sewing machine and that was special to me. After a while I didn't think much more about it. Well, the following May my parents came to our house for a visit, along with a large wrapped box. I remember thinking what on earth was in that box and why were they bringing us a gift. Well, as it turned out, Buck had called my parents and asked if they knew who had bought the quilt; of course they did. He enlisted their help and he was able to buy the quilt back from the highest bidder; he gave it to me

for our anniversary gift that year. It brought tears to my eyes then and now just writing about it brings tears to my eyes, what a kind, thoughtful and loving gift. To this day I treasure the fact that my mom taught me to sew and I have several quilts that she and grandma made.

I have veered off course a bit from the "logger's wife" perspective, but I wanted to share a small example of the kindhearted person I call my husband...my best friend! I hope that each of you fellow logging families may find something in this article that resonates with you. Through the challenges and frustrations we all can feel at times with having your own business, I pray that each of you feels the same way as I do about this one simple truth.....if asked whether I would make the same choices if I had it to do all over again; my answer would be without any hesitation "Absolutely I would!!!" I count my blessings every day that I was born and raised by loving parents and the Lord blessed me again by sending me a wonderful husband to spend my life with, I am truly grateful for these blessings.

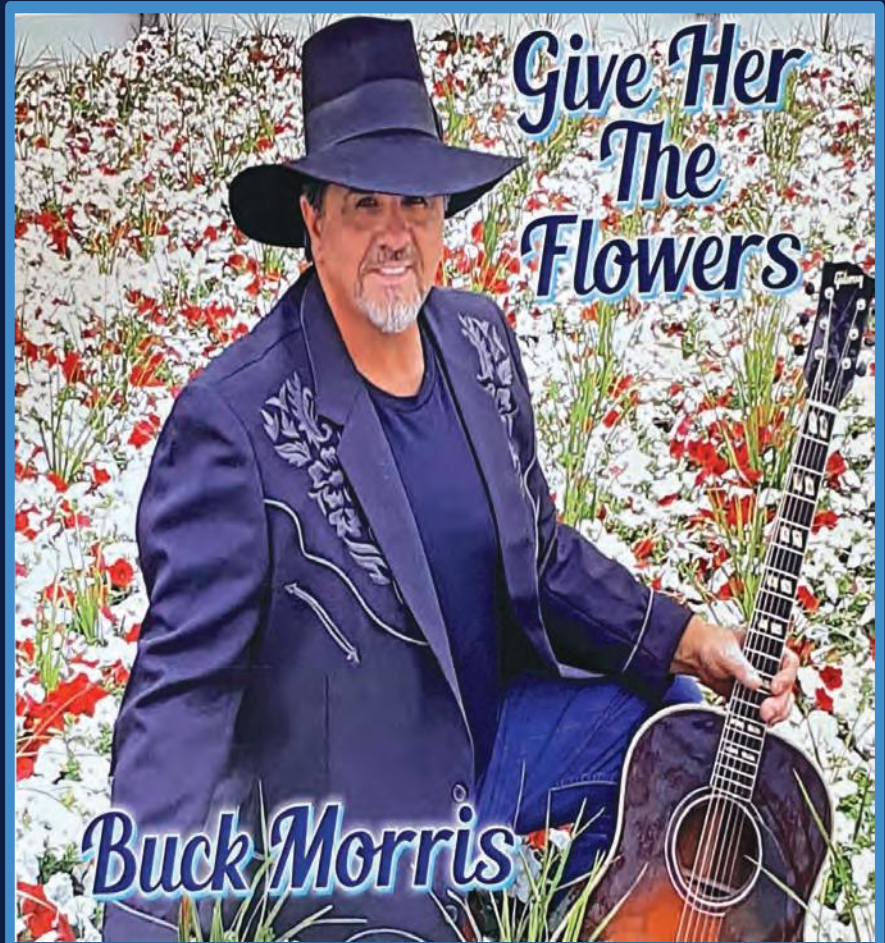
I want to thank each of you for the friendships that Buck and I have made throughout the past years as part of the Virginia Logger's Association. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge all of the hard work that goes into running this organization to include our annual conferences, training opportunities and the meetings with officials at the local, state and federal level to help change, enhance and strengthen the laws effecting the loggers. This family oriented organization is not only been beneficial to the members, but to the entire logging industry!

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to share a glimpse of what my life is like married to a logger. As we enter into this Season of the Celebration of the Birth of Christ, I want to encourage each of you to take some extra time to spend with your family and friends. Wishing each of you a very Merry Christmas and Blessings for a Healthy, Prosperous and Safe New Year!

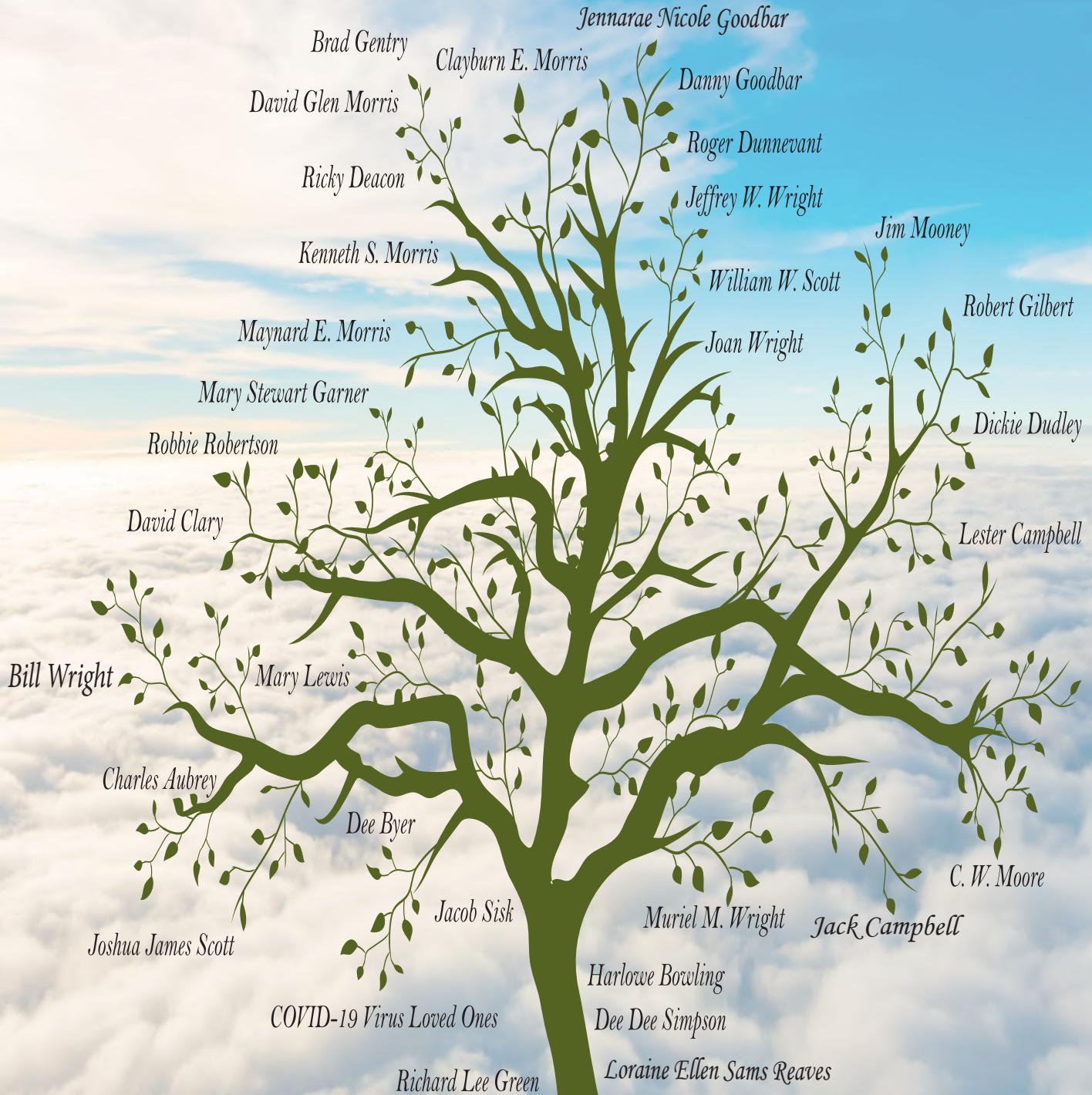
Peace and Warmest Wishes,
Cheryl H. Morris

Give Her The Flowers

- Buck Morris, VLA Board Member, just made one of his dreams come true.
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NEWS AND UPDATES FROM VIRGINIA TECH FOREST OPERATIONS EXTENSION

Scott Barrett, PhD,
Extension Specialist,
Forest Operations

Coordinator for the VA
SHARP Logger Program

VA Tech Department of
Forest Resources &
Environmental
Conservation

If you saw my presentation at the VLA annual meeting this year you saw a preview of the data we have on the number of people employed by logging businesses in Virginia. I wanted to share a little more detail on that data to highlight the significant contribution that loggers make to employment in Virginia's rural communities.

The data we used for this came from our statewide SHARP Logger survey which reaches most logging businesses in Virginia. One of the questions we asked business owners was simply "What is the total number of employees of your logging business?". This would include employees in the woods, at a shop, driving trucks, or in whatever capacity they were employed by the logging business. The average number of full-time employees per business (Figure 1) ranged from 2.3 in the Mountains to about 9.3 in the Coastal Plain region. Statewide the average was about 5 full time employees per business and 0.35 part-time employees per business.

Our survey data gives us a good estimate of the number of employees per business for those that responded to the survey, but not all loggers responded to our survey. Based on the number of businesses that responded (about 250) and the response rate that we got (around 42%) we assumed that we heard from about 42% of logging businesses in Virginia and extrapolated our data to estimate the total number of employees for logging businesses in Virginia. This estimate of the total number of employees of logging businesses in Virginia indicates there are about 2900 people employed full-time by loggers in Virginia (Figure 2).

Individual logging operations are typically small family owned businesses, but across the state there are a lot of logging businesses and that adds up to a big impact. So how does this estimate of total employment in logging businesses compare to employment in other larger companies in the forest industry? Using publicly available information I found on the internet, I looked at some estimates of the number of employees from some of the larger forest products mills in Virginia that you may be familiar with. Some of the data is a few years old, but it will still give you a pretty good comparison to the 2900 employees of logging businesses across the state. For example, the International Paper mill in Franklin has about 300 employees. Georgia Pacific has a little over 1000 employees in Virginia including the Big Island Paper Mill, Gladys/Brookneal OSB, Emporia Plywood, and Ridgeway-Martinsville Corrugated facility. WestRock has around 3000 employees in Virginia including three paper mills and a number of other office locations. And in case you were wondering, Virginia Tech has a little over 2000 instructional faculty.

With over 2900 employees, Virginia's logging businesses collectively have more employees than many of the largest forest industry companies have individually. And keep in mind that this estimate of logging company employees only includes direct employees. That doesn't necessarily include the owners who are often working in the woods with the crew as well. It also doesn't include contractors such as contract truckers or the economic impact logging has for a whole lot of other businesses that provide fuel, equipment, insurance, and other goods and services to loggers. The collective impact of logging employment is significant and plays a large role in supporting Virginia's rural economy and supporting the whole forest industry across the state.

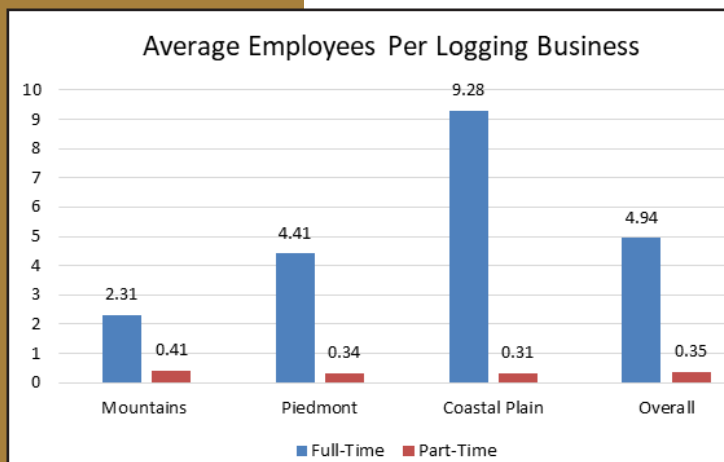


Figure 1. Average number of full-time and part-time employees per logging business in Virginia by region.

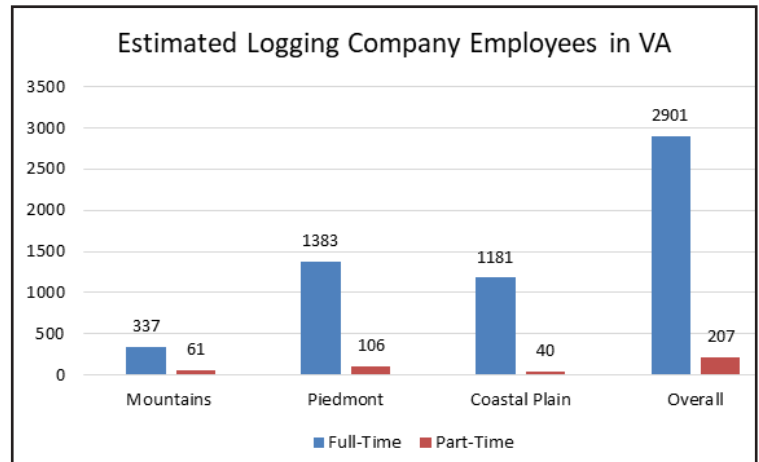


Figure 2. Estimated total number of logging company employees by region in Virginia.

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Trailer Service Manager

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I guess my love affair with wood started as an early 8-10-year-old boy growing up with a sawmill behind my house. The sound of the debarker, chipper, and sawmill blade as the carriage sent the log through it always fascinated me!

The men who hauled the logs in, usually on 2 axles/2-ton trucks, had wooden standards that they would cut



with an axe or saw, ***run, and get out of the way and let roll the logs off.***

The loader operator guys who worked at the sawmill would just pile the used standards off to the side in a pile. My grandfather Hunter Nash bought me a new wagon for Christmas one year. And in the springtime, I would

take both ends off and roll it down to the sawmill and load up those wooden standards on Saturday (when sawmill was not working) and haul those standards home. ***I was "hauling logs" and in heaven.... :)***

I would get a pile saved up and then my dad would load them in his pickup truck and give them to someone who could use them for firewood. I was always good size for my age so at 13 I started working at the sawmill in the summertime - my first paying job was \$5.00 a day for 8 hours.

I would pack lumber or throw slabs in the chipper as they came off the saw. I guess when I was around 15, I bought a 08 Stihl saw from my grandfather (he was the local Stihl dealer). I started cutting 5' pulpwood and hauling it on a trailer behind the farm tractor up to Gladys to



Continental Can Company. I could haul about a cord and a half on it.

My dad cosigned a note for me to buy my first skidder at 17, a John Deere 440A for \$6500.00. I loaded the logs and wood with a 1530 John Deere tractor. (same one you might see in some pictures I sent). I worked after school and on Saturdays to make that skidder payment. By that time, I had purchased a 1968



Dodge 2-ton single axle truck, I got this guy to help me, and we put a dead axle under it. When I was not hung up, I could haul 2500-2800 feet of good logs.

I got out of high school in 1976 and continued to log, bought a Husky knuckle boom and had a 15" Mobark feller - buncher mounted on a 951 Cat loader and had bought a new 518 Cat Skidder and later put a grapple on it. I had upgraded to 2 DM model live tandem Mack trucks. I was doing good until in 1981 when two of my men died in accidents.

The first one wrecked one of the Mack trucks with a load of 24' long oak wood headed to Riverville between Concord and Appomattox; the other accident happened when a tree I had just cut but was not grabbed by one of the arms in the feller buncher hit my man across the head in Chatham. I continued to log for another 2 years but my heart was not it. ***"I loved logging more than anything I had ever done but the markets were very bad in 1982 and I stopped logging in December."***

I went to work at my family's (two uncles & father) new wood treatment plant and stayed there until they all split up and started working at RockTenn Company almost 4 years. Next, I came to work in 1996 for Sonny Merryman as trailer shop manager. In 2016 as well as looking after the trailer shop, I started selling trailers,

mostly forestry trailers like log, chip, and flat beds since I already had a lot of good contacts.

In 1990 a lady from our church, Kedron Baptist Glady's with the WMU (Women's Missionary Union) asked if I would get a men's Brotherhood ministry started and we started a month or two later with 20 men!

We have had some men die out or move and have new ones join. ***"I have seen men bring their young sons to our group and now these young men are now adult men of their own."*** We have a GREAT group of men and we have done a variety of projects. We have built woodsheds, cut grass in many yards, trimmed countless shrubs, painted metal roofs, blown out a million gutter, helped move furniture, pianos, delivered food, and countless other things of kindness. ***"After 31 years we are still going good."***



A lot of us are getting older and we do have a few young ones coming along but not as many as I would like. God has blessed me with a good job and the means to buy a loader, log truck and other things to help with our ministry. ***"We have a great bunch on men and some of them have 'saw dust' in their blood like me."***

We are SO blessed to have my neighbors David Morton and AL Hines who work during the week sometime and cut up and split wood. Last year we gave away roughly 160 pickup loads of wood to people in need in the community.



Bobby Nichols and Bo have donated wood as well as several folks who may have dead or blown over trees that we will go get up and haul away on that good looking brown Chevy Wood Chuck!



God has blessed us as a group in SO many ways with good men, keeping us safe, and support from individuals. We have received discounts on new chain saws we have bought from Philips Equipment in Rustburg and SMI has given me church discounts on the two trailers I bought (one flat we process the wood, and one van sitting on the ground) that stores our saws and supplies and wood splitters. Long Island Lumber and H&S Construction, of Long Island, VA graciously donated several dump - truck loads of firewood for their ministry. ***I think one of the best things for me was advice from my grandfather and father - "Love the lord, work hard and treat people honestly."***

Binnie made it clear as he shared his story of his love for wood and service to others. Binnie said, ***"I still love the smell of that fresh sawdust coming out of that sharp Stihl"***.






BE AWARE LOGGER SAFETY TRAINING

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BRYAN WAGNER

As if we were not already aware, logging is an inherently dangerous occupation. A simple mistake or a miscalculation can result in serious injury or worse. We work in a very unforgiving environment. Great risk is present in all areas of a logging job. As an industry, we must stay focused and aware of the risks specific to the tasks that we are performing. As an insurance company, we constantly drill loss control and training towards the manual felling and topping areas of a logging job, which is warranted. Without a doubt manual felling and topping have the highest risk levels that are present on any logging operation.

Recently we have seen an increase in “other” types of incidents. Injuries have been reported while performing “normal” maintenance on logging equipment. Remember, every task on a logging job has its own specific risk or hazard. We must constantly be aware and focused on where the specific risk is on the job that we are doing. Highlighted are some risk areas that seem to need attention, according to recent claims reported.

- 
- **Are lock-out, tag-out procedures being followed?**
 - **After the machine is properly locked out, do you have a steady, safe place to perform your work? Are your boots muddy? Is the machine free from oil or grease that may cause a slipping incident?**
 - **What’s going to happen if this wrench slips? Will I be injured from a fall, or will I injure my hands? Am I using the proper tool for the job?**
 - **Are you focused on Slip/Trip and Fall issues associated with the deck area? Loose bark, logging mats, and mud are responsible for numerous “other” claims.**
 - **Are your employees using their seat belts?**
 - **Is proper 3-point of contact mounting and dismounting being used?**
 - **Is care being taken while backing vehicles?**
 - **Are workers reminded of the dangers around the deck area; this is a very busy place? Is high visibility clothing being used?**
 - **Are eye and face protection being used? Am I visible? Am I in a “blind spot”?**

The questions asked seem to be basic, but a great deal of risk can be reduced by following them. We must constantly remember every aspect or area of a logging operation has its own risk or hazard factor. Awareness and staying focused can reduce the chance of being injured in the “other” category. The goal is to have employees get in the service truck to leave the job, the same way they got there in the morning, healthy and safe!

SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTION

SPANBERGER WRITES PRESIDENT BIDEN

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

November 22, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

I am writing to share my serious concerns over the growing supply chain crisis across the country and around the world, and to ask that you appoint a Supply Chain Czar to coordinate a federal response these issues.

As we approach Thanksgiving and continue our recovery from the pandemic, Americans have so much to be thankful for this year, but supply chain disruptions, shortages, and increased prices loom large over too many families sitting at dining room tables. And with the holidays around the corner, my constituents are concerned about whether they will be able to purchase gifts that arrive in time for Christmas. More must be done to address this crisis at all levels of government.

As America's economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, disruptions to supply chains and labor shortages in key sectors have resulted in delays delivering essential goods and price increases across the economy. While I am encouraged that the recently passed *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* includes provisions to ease bottlenecks at ports, bolster our trucking workforce, and generally invest in infrastructure essential to the movement of goods domestically, my constituents need immediate action to ease daily price shocks. As such, I urge you to appoint a Supply Chain Czar responsible for coordinating a federal response to supply chain disruptions across all relevant agencies, working with state and local governments to address bottlenecks wherever they occur, and finding ways to bolster American manufacturing and supply chain resilience at home.

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented changes to U.S. consumer behavior, placing strain on our supply chains and aging infrastructure. In 2020 alone, U.S. e-commerce sales grew more than 30 percent from 2019 and accounted for 14 percent of all U.S. sales.¹ The surge in demand for durable goods occurred as global shutdowns shuttered factories, resulting in shortages and the backlog of goods at U.S. ports and railyards. Currently, 77 percent of the world's ports are experiencing unusually long turnaround times, and ports across the U.S. are experiencing record wait times for incoming ships. Last week, U.S. ports in Los Angeles and Long Beach had a combined congestion rate of 56 percent, and the Port of Savannah reported an 81% congestion rate.²

U.S. supply chains are also struggling with a shortage of workers in the trucking industry. According to a recent report from the American Trucking Association, the United States currently has a truck driver shortage of about 80,000 drivers — a 30 percent increase from the pre-pandemic shortage of drivers. If

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

this trend continues, the shortage is expected to grow to as much as 160,000 by 2030.³ This persistent driver shortage has further compounded the backlog at ports and railyards as there are insufficient drivers to transport the offloaded goods nationwide.

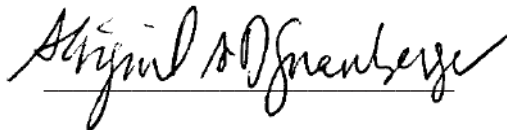
My constituents are also deeply concerned about how supply chain disruptions have resulted in increased prices for goods. According to a report from the U.S. Department of Labor released last week, the consumer price index, which measures prices across a basket of representative goods and services, rose by 6.2 percent since this time last year. This rise marks the most significant increase in prices since December 1990.⁴

According to the same report, fuel prices have soared 12.3 percent over the last month, up 59.1 percent from the previous year.⁵ Increased fuel costs are especially devastating for my rural constituents, who more often have long commutes to and from work. Similarly, energy costs for home heating and electricity are quickly increasing. As we approach the winter months, I am concerned that surges in the prices for natural gas, electricity, and home heating oil may force some families to choose between heat and other essentials such as medicine, food, and other utilities.

My constituents also face increased costs at the grocery store. In 2020, many districts saw record lines of cars outside our community food banks. While this situation has drastically improved over the last year thanks to COVID relief efforts and a recovering economy, I am deeply concerned that increased food costs could harm those families that are just beginning to recover from the pandemic. Food prices in September 2021 increased by nearly as much as they did during all of 2019, driven by surging costs for meat and poultry.⁶ With the Thanksgiving holiday right around the corner, the U.S. Farm Bureau Federation reports that the price for a family of ten's Thanksgiving meal has increased to \$53 this year, up \$6 from 2020.⁷

I appreciate your attention to this serious matter, and I look forward to working with your administration and a newly appointed Supply Chain Czar to address these issues and set our economy and our constituents on a path towards long-term economic prosperity.

Respectfully,



Abigail D. Spanberger

Member of Congress

³ <https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/19/economy/trucking-short-drivers/index.html>

⁴ <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/10/consumer-price-index-october.html>

⁵ <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/10/consumer-price-index-october.html>

⁶ <https://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Article/2021/10/26/Food-prices-continue-to-climb-twice-as-fast-as-all-items-in-September-bringing-YOY-increase-to-4.6#>

⁷ <https://www.fb.org/newsroom/farm-bureau-survey-shows-thanksgiving-dinner-cost-up-14>



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- 1 HONEYBAKED HAM BONE
- 12 CUPS OF COLD WATER
- 1 PACKAGE OF HONEYBAKED BEAN SOUP MIX
- 2 BAY LEAVES MIXED
- 1 CUP DICED CELERY
- 1 CUP DICED ONIONS
- 1/2 TSP SALT
- 1 28OZ CAN WHOLE TOMATOES
- 1 TSP CHOPPED GARLIC
- 1 TSP BLACK PEPPER



DIRECTIONS

1. PLACE HAM BONE IN A LARGE STOCK POT.
2. ADD 12 CUPS COLD WATER AND BRING TO A BOIL.
3. ADD HONEYBAKED MIXED BEAN SOUP MIX WITH CONTENTS OF SEASONING PACKET. RETURN TO A BOIL AND REDUCE HEAT TO SIMMER.
4. SIMMER FOR APPROXIMATELY 2 HOURS.
5. REMOVE HAM BONE AND ALLOW TO COOL.
6. ADD REMAINING INGREDIENTS AND CONTINUE TO COOK OVER MODERATE HEAT FOR APPROXIMATELY 60 MINUTES OR UNTIL BEANS ARE TENDER.
7. REMOVE MEAT FROM HAM BONE AND DICE FINE.
8. RETURN THE MEAT TO THE SOUP.

Loaded Crockpot Hash Brown Potato Soup

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 (20-ounce) bag Simply Potato Shredded Hash Brown Potatoes
- 32 oz chicken broth
- 1/2 cup shredded carrots
- 7 slices of bacon, cooked and diced (reserve 2 sliced for toppings)
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 cup onion diced
- 1-2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoon flour
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese



DIRECTIONS:

Into a 4-5qt crockpot, add in potatoes, carrots, bacon, broth, water, onion, garlic, salt and pepper. Cook on HIGH 3 hours. or LOW for 6 hours. Once cooking time is done, whisk flour and cream together until smooth. Add to slow cooker. Cover and cook on LOW for 30 minutes. Next add cheese and stir until cheese is melted. Serve hot with cheese, sour cream, bacon and green onions.

APPLE PIE BITES

Prep: 15 minutes - Bake: 15 minutes at 400°F

Cool: 5 minutes - Makes: 24 bites

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 of a 17.3-oz. pkg. frozen puff pastry sheets (1 sheet), thawed
- 1 1/2 cups finely chopped apples, peeled if desired
- 2 tsp. sugar
- 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 10 vanilla caramels, unwrapped•
- 3 Tbsp. heavy cream Chopped toasted pecans Sea salt flakes



PREHEAT oven to 400°F. On a lightly floured surface unfold puff pastry sheet. Roll pastry into a 15x10-inch rectangle; cut into twenty four 2 1/2-inch squares. Fit each square into a 1 1/4-inch muffin cup.

STIR together apples, sugar, and cinnamon. Spoon into pastry-lined muffin cups. Bake about 15 minutes or until pastry is golden. Cool 5 minutes in pan. Carefully remove bites from pan.

MEANWHILE, heat and stir caramels and cream over very low heat until melted and smooth. Drizzle bites with caramel sauce and sprinkle with pecans. Sprinkle lightly with sea salt. Serve immediately.

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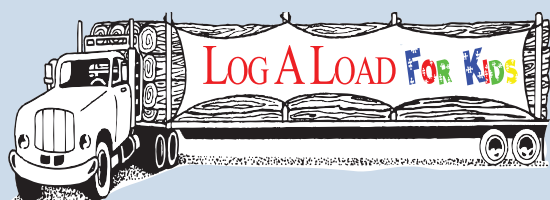
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of Richmond at VCU



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-MIX 98.1 - 6am-7pm

-1140 WRVA/96.1 FM - 5:30am-10am and 3-6pm

-BIG 98.5 - 6-10am

-NBC 12 - 5am-7am, 12pm (only Day 2, I believe), 4-6pm

-*with special mentions on 106.5 The BEAT and Q94

Tune in to hear stories from local families who have relied on the services and care at Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU.

Learn how donations this year will help support the Wonder Tower - CHoR's new inpatient hospital specifically designed and built for kids and their families to receive exceptional medical care in an oasis-like environment where healing can happen.



And, be sure to listen for special hours where gifts can be **doubled or TRIPLED** for Children's Hospital. Thanks to our friends at **Log A Load For Kids**, and all those who support their efforts throughout the year, we'll celebrate this generosity on December 1st from 7-8am and again on December 2nd from 8-9am across each live station.



Call: 804-228-KIDS (5437)

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Give Online: www.36HoursRVA.org

And when you're done, sign our virtual beam and leave your mark on our new children's hospital building, the Wonder Tower!



Special Thank You

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NIKKI ROBERTSON

State Chairman | Log-A-Load Foundation
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Stephen Setliff

SETLIFF'S

Charged with Reckless Driving by Speed in Virginia: What Now?

A reckless driving charge in Virginia is not merely a moving violation or a simple speeding ticket. This is because Virginia makes reckless driving a criminal offense, and more specifically, a class one misdemeanor. For context, class one misdemeanors are the most serious misdemeanors in Virginia. They are punishable by up to 12 months in jail and also carry the potential of up to a \$2,500 fine. Other examples of class one misdemeanors include petit larceny, assault and battery, and DUI.

If you drive at a speed of 20 miles per hour or more in excess of the speed limit or in excess of 85 miles per hour regardless of the applicable speed limit, you could be charged with reckless driving in Virginia. See Va. Code § 46.2-862. Unlike general speeding tickets, a reckless driving ticket cannot be prepaid and generally requires you to show up to court unless you retain an attorney who can typically handle the ticket for you. In many instances, out of state drivers who are cited in Virginia will hire an attorney to negotiate the ticket on their behalf. This makes it convenient for out of state drivers who do not want to return to Virginia for the hearing.

Other Penalties and Consequences: In addition to the penalties referenced above, a reckless driving by speed conviction carries other potential consequences including: 6 demerit points on your driving record, the conviction remaining on your driving record for 11 years, license suspension up to 6 months, and increased insurance premiums. For CDL drivers or other contract workers, a reckless driving conviction or license suspension could have detrimental effects on your employment.

It is also important to understand the practical consequences. Typically, judges do not order active jail time as a result of a reckless driving conviction (unless there are aggravating circumstances such as causing a severe accident, and/or traveling 90 miles per hour above the speed limit combined with a poor driving record).

Additionally, jurisdictions in Virginia vary significantly on procedure based on the judge's practices and other policies. In most jurisdictions, reckless driving tickets are handled solely by the judge and the officer who issued the summons. However, in some jurisdictions, such as Prince William County, the Commonwealth prosecutes reckless driving matters. It is vital to know the practice common in the jurisdiction in which you were convicted.

Defenses: During any trial for reckless driving, the officer (or Commonwealth) must prove each element of the offense. This means the state bears the burden of proving you were driving a motor vehicle, on the highway, in the county and at the speed charged on the summons. This may seem apparent but there are many technicalities that could arise to support a dismissal of your case. For example, for any questions regarding speed, the officer must be able to attest to the accuracy of the laser speed device, radar, microcomputer device, or photo speed monitoring device used in the traffic stop. Va. Code 46.2-882 specifically lays out certain requirements that must be met relative to the officer's calibration. For example, the officer is required to have a certification as to the accuracy of the device which shall be valid for no longer than six months. See Va. Code 46.2-882. Drivers should keep this in mind before considering pleading guilty to a reckless driving ticket.

Mitigating Factors and Other Possibilities: Having a good driving record, being polite and cooperative with the officer, and taking a Virginia DMV-approved driving improvement class are all mitigating factors that could potentially increase the likelihood of receiving a more favorable outcome for your reckless driving ticket.

In some circumstances, having your vehicle's speedometer calibrated could potentially serve as a possible defense as well.

Even if a dismissal is not possible, some drivers may be eligible to have their reckless driving charge reduced to regular speeding or even improper driving. Pursuant to Va. Code § 46.2-869, where the degree of culpability is slight, the judge or the Commonwealth has the discretion to reduce the reckless driving charge to improper driving. Improper driving is not a misdemeanor and is punishable by a fine of no more than \$500 and carries only 3 demerit points.

Do not simply plead guilty to a reckless driving ticket. It is highly recommended that drivers charged with reckless driving by speed in Virginia be proactive in their defense and consult with an experienced attorney.

For questions or comments, please contact Cindy S. Foster (cfoster@setlifflaw.com) at 804-377-1275 or Steve Setliff (ssetliff@setlifflaw.com) at 804-377-1261.



Study Finds Singing and Dancing Reduce Chances of Safety Critical Events Among Commercial Drivers

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many Americans' driving habits changed. Stay-at-home orders, telecommuting, and other factors led to a decrease in the number of drivers on the road. Yet, according to early estimates by the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 38,680 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2020—the largest projected number of fatalities since 2007. This represents a 7.2% increase in fatalities from the previous year. What accounts for this apparent anomaly? Are there any lessons commercial fleet operators may glean? A recent study sponsored by NHTSA and performed by the Virginia Tech Transportation Research Institute offers some valuable takeaways for safety professionals seeking to mitigate safety risks posed by driver distractions and fatigue.

Published in August 2021 and entitled "Analysis of Naturalistic Driving Data to Assess Distraction and Drowsiness in Drivers of Commercial Motor Vehicles," the study analyzed more than 3.8 million miles of data from 225 vehicles and 245 drivers from 7 commercial fleets. While there is no shortage of data pointing to the effectiveness of video-based onboard monitoring data to identify and augment unsafe driver behaviors, the study sought to quantify the impact of "qualitative" issues such as driver fatigue and distraction. The study confirmed many of known mitigation strategies—e.g., hands-free devices are significantly safer than handheld phones—but also offered insights that are not so intuitive.

In their analysis of environmental factors contributing to safety critical events (SCEs), researchers found that a majority of SCEs occurred in daylight under non-adverse conditions in moderate or low-traffic areas. While the study offers no ultimate conclusions, the findings suggest that relatively safe driving conditions can lull drivers into a false sense of security on the road. In these circumstances, a driver may feel more comfortable engaging in the risky behaviors known to cause SCEs. The implications seem clear—less-crowded roads do not necessarily equate to a reduction in accidents. On the contrary, emptier roads and favorable road conditions appear to increase risky driver behavior due to the lowered perception of risk.

In terms of driver behavior, the study confirmed that external distractions, including reaching for food items, adjusting clothing, and adjusting and/or monitoring GPS or satellite radio, all increased the risk of being involved in an SCE. The time taken by a driver to attend to these tasks resulted, on average, in four seconds of his or her eyes being off the road. While a driver's eyes being off the road for any time is unsafe, the study found there is a significant increase in the likelihood of being involved in a SCE event when the driver is distracted for two or more seconds.

The study also examined measures to mitigate driver drowsiness. Researchers found that driver talking and/or singing—to an imaginary audience or to another person via a hands-free device—resulted in less drowsiness and reduced chances of involvement in an SCE. Perhaps the most humorous finding of the study demonstrated that driver dancing resulted in significantly decreased drowsiness. Although the study fell short of advocating dance lessons as part of driver training curricula, encouraging drivers to sing along to their favorite tunes may go a long way in counteracting fatigue and other subjective hazards.

If you have questions about this article, please contact Joshua Howell (jhowell@setliffllaw.com) at 804-377-1263 or Steve Setliff (ssetliff@setliffllw.com) at 804-377-1261.



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