



June 11, 2013

EMPLOYER
ADDRESS
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**Regarding: Labor & Industries Account ID: XXXXXX
Logger Safety Initiative**

Dear Business owner,

We are sending you this letter to tell you more about the **Logger Safety Initiative** and the work your industry leaders are doing to help reduce injuries at manual logging operations, as well as lower workers' compensation costs.

As you may know, the initiative began last year when the WA Contract Logger Association (WCLA), the WA Forest Protection Association (WFPA), and Commissioner of Public Lands, Peter Goldmark began talks with L&I.

Currently, there are two key efforts underway:

1. **A new Logger Safety Initiative Taskforce has been formed to work on ensuring a "safety first" culture for all logging employers and workers:** The taskforce, made up of timber industry leaders, is discussing how to create a culture in which workplace safety is treated as a first priority and a shared responsibility through the industry. The taskforce believes it is critical for workers to be trained and encouraged to work safely -- and that there are measures in place that support safety in the woods, including regular third-party inspection and certification on a voluntary basis.
2. **L&I audits and education for logging companies:** Recently, you received a letter in the mail explaining that L&I would be auditing quarterly reports and premiums to make sure that workers' hours are correctly reported. For example, an employer could inadvertently consider a worker to be an *independent contractor* rather than an employee who needs workers' comp coverage, or could be reporting employee hours in the wrong "risk class" with a different rate. The goal is to help make sure everyone in your industry group is reporting correctly, so we can keep rates as low as possible for everyone. As the letter explained, workshops are being held this summer to explain proper reporting procedures as well as talk about risk management, classification and safety.

More information about the initiative is enclosed. You are not required to do anything at this point, but we'll be sending you more information as it becomes available. If you'd like to learn more, contact one of the co-chairs or Rachel Aarts with L&I at 360.902.6665 or Rachel.Aarts@lni.wa.gov.

Thank you,

Ed Bryant & Norm Schaaf
Co-Chairs of the Logger Safety Taskforce

Vickie Kennedy
Dept. of Labor and Industries



More Information about the Washington State's Logger Safety Initiative

How did this initiative get started?

The Logging Safety Initiative began in 2012 when industry leaders from the WA Contract Logger Association (WCLA), the WA Forest Protection Association (WFPA), and Commissioner of Public Lands, Peter Goldmark began meeting with L&I to discuss the workers' compensation rates, trends and injury statistics for non-mechanized or manual logging operations (5001).

In recent years, risk class 5001 has experienced catastrophic and costly claims, but fewer hours have been reported by employers – a situation that has more than doubled the base rate over the past five years. Trends indicate the rates are likely to increase further in the future, due to the number of severe injuries in the past few years. During initial meetings, all parties agreed that too many injuries were occurring and that logging companies were facing unaffordable workers' compensation premium rates. Action to improve logging safety is an urgent need.

From the beginning, a key focus has been on finding ways to improve the safety performance of the industry so both the frequency and severity of injuries could be reduced. L&I agreed to work with industry representatives to organize a Logger Safety Taskforce that would develop a Washington State Logger Safety Initiative.

In January 2013, a letter confirming their commitment to providing the time and resources to build a successful safety program was finalized and signed by all of the parties. Governor Jay Inslee signed the commitment letter on May 21, 2013.

When did the taskforce start and who is involved?

The Logger Safety Taskforce was initiated in March 2013, and includes both a policy and technical committee. Ed Bryant of ENB Logging & Construction and Norm Schaaf of Merrill & Ring, are policy committee co-chairs. Other members include logging company representatives, WCLA, forest landowners, WFPA, L&I and the WA Department of Natural Resources.

What is the taskforce doing?

The Logger Safety Task Force is urgently working to develop the Logger Safety Initiative and a safety training certification program. We are working to establish a website that will provide more detailed information.

How is the Legislature involved?

The Logger Safety Initiative was supported by the passage of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB 5744) by the Washington State Legislature in April 2013. It was signed by Governor Inslee in May. This legislation acknowledges the need for the Logger Safety Taskforce's work, recognizing that workers in manual logging (especially younger workers new to the industry) have more frequent and more severe injuries than in other industries.