

# INDUSTRY ALERT

## FATALITY

### *1992 incident highlights hazards of logging roads in summer*

#### **What happened?**

On a day in late June 1992, a truck was hauling a load of pulp wood out of the bush in northwestern Ontario when it crashed into the rear of another fully loaded pulp truck. The lead driver managed to pull the injured driver from his truck, but prolonged blood loss from a compound fracture of the pelvis eventually resulted in the driver's death.

#### **Why did it happen?**

A heavy cloud of dust kicked up by previous traffic was hanging over the road at the time of the incident. There was no wind to clear the dust and no recent rainfall to dampen the road. The surface of the road was in poor condition, with many potholes. The driver of the lead truck had been alerted to the presence of another truck behind him by a third driver who had passed him in the opposite direction. But the driver of the second truck had no radio and was unaware that there was a fully loaded truck ahead of him.

#### **How can it be prevented?**

A coroner's inquest into this incident heard that 23 of the 25 trucks involved in the company's hauling operations were equipped with two-way radios so that drivers could communicate their location to other drivers using the road. The fatally injured driver was one of two drivers who did not have a radio. This communication ability is a key element of safe travel on logging roads, regardless of the time of year.

Because logging road conditions are variable and the roads are not patrolled by police or even regulated by the Highway Traffic Act, companies have a legal obligation to police themselves and their drivers. Recent initiatives in some parts of the province, such as the mandatory installation of tachographs in log haul trucks to monitor speed, distance travelled, brake use and engine RPM, have helped to improve driver practices. But fatal incidents continue to occur on Ontario logging roads, and speed is a major factor in many of them.

The coroner's jury identified the pressures of pay-per-haul instead of an hourly wage as a factor in unsafe driving on log haul roads. The jury also recommended that log haul companies review the number of hours drivers are allowed to drive before a mandatory rest period.

A combination of driver-to-driver communications, good road maintenance, driver speeds appropriate to the conditions and vigilant enforcement of company policies and procedures for safety on logging roads can prevent this kind of incident.

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