

Track #1 - Published Abstract

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Assessing Overall Health and Improving Injury Surveillance of Maine Logging Workers

According to 2015 US Bureau of Labor Statistics reports, work-related fatality rates for logging workers (132.7 per 100,000 full-time employees [FTE]) were the highest for any civilian occupation and nearly forty times the all-worker fatality rate (3.4 per 100,000 FTE). During 2006-2015, the Census for Fatal Occupational Injury identified 788 logging fatalities. While traumatic for victims' families, coworkers, and employers, these incidents also harbor significant societal and economic costs. Non-fatal traumatic injury, cumulative trauma, and chronic disease also pose a great burden to this population, though the extent of this remains mostly unknown. The lack of data available on worker health and hazard exposures impedes the ability to set priorities and improve loggers' overall health and safety. In order to establish priorities and measure trends related to occupational safety and health in the logging industry, it is essential to have a reliable method for collecting in-depth, worker health data. The NEC is doing a 5-year research study (2017-2021) with the long-term goal of gathering data to provide a more complete picture of overall worker health and risk exposures in the Northeast logging industry. This goal will be achieved through these objectives 1) Assess and improve logging injury and illness surveillance systems, 2) Conduct a total worker health assessment of the Maine logging workforce and 3) Identify factors related to injuries and worker health in the Maine logging workforce. These objectives will involve piloting the following data collection methods for logging industry workers in Maine: quarterly telephone surveys, secondary data analyses, and physical measures (health screening). When fully achieved, this proposal's objectives will determine the viability of collecting in-depth injury, health, and exposure data from logging workers using quarterly surveys and health screenings; provide an overall assessment of worker health and factors contributing to health and safety in the Maine logging industry; and assess the accuracy of passive injury and illness surveillance systems. This presentation will review the enrollment of the cohort of 340 Maine loggers and the preliminary results from the initial health and safety survey. The NEC hopes that the results of this study will help develop a more complete picture of general worker health and occupational hazard exposures in the Northeast logging industry. With this increased knowledge, the NEC can help prioritize interventions and approaches to improve loggers' working conditions in the Northeast. This information will also provide immediate opportunities to tailor the NEC's and other partner agencies' health and safety activities to issues prominently identified by the study.