



Training notes from the woods & the classroom

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Safely Handling and Stacking Roundwood

By Lee Schauman

No matter what kind of logging operation we have, handling and stacking roundwood is going to be a part of it. Whether it's shortwood, or tree length, it all has to be piled –both on the landing and at the mill. And both places require a few rules to be sure no one gets injured during that portion of your operations. There are basically three ways to handle round wood: by hand, with fork lift/clam, and by grapple. Obviously, the grapple loader is the most common, but by no means eliminates the other two.

Hand piling round wood is almost exclusively done in the woods by hand cutters. A few simple rules will help you stay safe.

- Wear a hard hat, good gripping gloves, and safety shoes.
- The secret of handling round wood by hand is safely lifting the load. Always lift with your legs, not your back. Squat – don't bend, keeping your back straight and gripping the wood securely.
- Be sure you are firmly positioned to prevent any type of slip.
- Always use hand tools available for the job. Pickaroons or hand tongs are always a good way to aid in moving round wood.
- Never move more than you're capable –get help or let your skidder operator assist you.
- Smashed fingers and toes are always a possibility. Carefully placing wood in piles to avoid these injuries is always paramount.

Fork lifts and or clam loaders:

As always, when using a machine to do the work, follow the basic rules of machine operation and always keep your stacks of wood constructed so they can't roll out.

- Always do a walk around inspection to check for vandalism or necessary repairs before starting your machine.
- Fasten your seat belt BEFORE starting machine. That way it'll be in place before you move it.
- Be sure all machine control levers are in the neutral position before starting the machine.
- Never leave the area of the machine with the machine running.
- Keep hands, feet and arms away from pinch points and/or hydraulic cylinder areas.

- Avoid jerky movements or sharp turns, sudden stops or starts, or reverses.
- Never dismount the machine with the boom raised.
- Shut machine down before making adjustments.
- Carry loads as low as possible for stability. If the load is too large to see around, back up to your destination.
- Be sure the load is securely placed on forks or in clams. Before moving, if there are any loose or protruding sticks, re position the load.
- Check your fire extinguisher and first aid kits frequently to be sure they are current.
- Familiarize yourself with the owner's manual on a regular basis. It gives safe operating tips and can tell you a lot about regular maintenance and machine capabilities and limitations. Don't exceed them.
- When stacking logs or pulpwood, don't stack the wood to a maximum lifting height. Being at the machines extreme limits can be very dangerous.
- Always stack piles so they are secure. Ramp the ends and slant them back so wood can't come rolling off by vibrations of machinery etc.
- As always, get properly trained, and don't be a cowboy!!

Grapple loaders:

This is by far the most common type of machine used to move/stack logs and pulpwood. The rules are generally the same for all machinery, so follow the same rules used with the forklift/clam. Additional rules that might apply to both types of machines are:

- Check for damaged hoses and fittings, replacing any leaking components to prevent oil accumulation on machine parts or walking surfaces.
- Inspect the boom for any cracks, excess wear, etc., and repair as necessary.
- Always operate in a clear area with crew members or by standers standing at a safe distance away.
- NEVER allow anyone to walk under a suspended load – AND THAT INCLUDES YOU!!
- When the machine is idle always lower the boom to the ground or the bed of the truck.
- Always check for overhead hazards and clearances, and especially be aware of overhead power lines.
- Don't attempt to swing the load until the load has actually cleared the ground.
- Do a visual inspection of the loader after each shift to be sure it will be ready for the next day. Take care of any repairs today to avoid delays tomorrow.
- Keep the loader properly lubricated to avoid unnecessary wear or damage and possible injury should the loader fail structurally.
- When you have unloaded your truck and are ready to drive it out on the highway, be sure your truck bed is clear of debris. Bark, rocks, dirt, etc., can bounce off the bed and onto the road, or worse yet, can come off and strike a passing vehicle. It is your responsibility as a truck driver to be sure your truck bed is clean before you get back on the road.

With these few safety tips and good common sense, you and your fellow workers will have another safe and productive day.

Work Safe!

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