



September 2014

## Logger Safety Initiative

*The Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) began working with logging industry leaders in 2012 to find ways to improve the industry's safety performance and prevent worker injuries.*

### What is the Logger Safety Initiative?

The Logger Safety Initiative is a multi-organization effort to create and implement a successful safety program for the non-mechanized (manual) logging industry. It began in 2012 when industry leaders from the Washington Contract Logger Association (WCLA), Washington Forest Protection Association (WFPA), and the Commissioner of Public Lands began meeting with L&I to discuss workers' compensation rates, trends, and injury statistics for non-mechanized or manual logging operations.

### The problem

Workers in manual logging (especially younger workers new to the industry) have more frequent and more severe injuries than workers in other industries. This is reflected in a very high workers' compensation rate. In 2014, the base rate for logging was \$20.18 per hour; in 2015, the proposed base rate is \$18.68 per hour, including the overall rate increase. This is a seven percent decline. While this is encouraging news, it is too soon to see and measure the direct impact of the LSI program on safety, claim costs, and premiums.

### Logger Safety Taskforce

In March 2013, L&I and industry representatives created a Logger Safety Taskforce to develop a safety program for the manual logging industry. The Legislature passed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5744 in April 2013 acknowledging the need for the taskforce's work.

The taskforce is a group of representatives from:

- Washington Forest Protection and Contract Loggers associations
- Department of Natural Resources
- Private landowners
- Logging companies
- L&I

The taskforce's purpose is to address severe injuries and rising workers' compensation costs in the logging industry. Its goals are to:

- Promote a "safety first" culture for all logging industry employers and workers
- Reduce frequency and severity of injuries
- Prevent deaths
- Increase proper reporting of workers' hours by employers calculating premium payments
- Explore additional ways to reduce costs in the logging industry

## Accomplishments

To date, 88 logging companies are participating in the logger safety program, and more are expected to join.

- **Financial incentive:** The taskforce created a financial incentive that gives participating logging employers an opportunity to reduce their workers' compensation costs by up to 20 percent if they:
  - Undergo a workers' compensation audit and a comprehensive safety consultation
  - Develop and implement an L&I-approved Accident Prevention Plan
  - Pass an independent, third-party safety audit

If the full discount had been available in 2013, participating employers would have paid an estimated \$2 million less in premiums – money that could have been used for improved safety.

- **Reporting workshops:** Working with the taskforce, L&I held a series of workshops around the state in 2013 to train employers to correctly report worker hours when calculating premium payments. The agency is now conducting audits to ensure employers in the manual logging industry group are reporting correctly. Correct reporting prevents businesses from underpaying their share of premiums, which drives up workers' compensation rates for all businesses in the state.

## Need more information?

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