



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Timber!

Nonoccupational Logging Fatalities — Vermont, 1997–2007

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Felling that backyard tree might not be as easy as it seems. Logging is one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. Dozens of professional lumberjacks are killed each year in the United States, and these are men with expertise and the equipment to handle such jobs. Most weekend do-it-yourselfers have neither the know-how nor the tools to take on such risky work.

Dr. Scott Laney is an EIS Officer with CDC, and he's joining us today by phone to discuss the dangers of nonoccupational logging. Welcome to the show, Scott.

[Dr. Laney] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Scott, what led you to study this particular problem?

[Dr. Laney] Well, you know, we've known for a long time that professional loggers, the guys who do this for a living, are over twenty times more likely to die at work compared to other professions and it's always been in the top five spots for the most dangerous jobs. Usually first or second was commercial fishing. So, we knew it's dangerous to begin with among professionals, but what we haven't really had a good handle on is how common are injuries and fatalities among non-professionals. So, we wanted to take a look at this non-professional group.

[Dr. Gaynes] So, how many novice loggers are killed or seriously injured each year?

[Dr. Laney] Well, the best that we can figure out, just using Vermont as our reference point, where the study that I conducted was. We count on three to four logging deaths per year among nonoccupational loggers, which doesn't sound like much, but Vermont's the most rural state, so it is quite significant.

[Dr. Gaynes] What's the most common cause of injury or death?

[Dr. Laney] By far, it's tree felling. A tree falling on you is the most common cause. In our study, 78 percent of fatalities resulted from being struck by a tree.

[Dr. Gaynes] If an untrained person is determined to attempt some kind of logging activity, what precautions should they take?

[Dr. Laney] First and foremost, they should not go out into the woods alone. We found that being alone is a risk factor for greater illness and injury. If someone's there to help you, to extract you

from a dangerous environment in the woods, that's very important. Also, of course, personal protective equipment, such as helmets, is very important for your safety.

[Dr. Gaynes] So, based on your study, would you recommend that the general public always hire a professional for this type of job or is there anything that they can do, in terms of logging activity, that would be safe for them?

[Dr. Laney] There are things that are relatively safe, with respect to fatalities. One thing that we found is that professional loggers should be hired for tree felling, and we do recommend that. However, professionals can come and cut trees on your property and you can cut those to lengths, cut those with wood splitters for firewood, those types of activities. However, standing timber should really be done by professionals.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about nonoccupational logging?

[Dr. Laney] Nonoccupational logging is something that hasn't been studied extensively. However, safe logging practices have been established by a number of organizations. There's a website called safelogging.com, that's www.safelogging.com, where you can find a number of important links to general safe logging practices.

[Dr. Gaynes] Scott, thanks for sharing this information with our listeners today.

[Dr. Laney] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, that's it for this week's show. Be sure and join us again next week. Until then, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.