

Michigan Association of Timbermen Position Paper
On
Crib Trailers for Hauling Pulpwood and Logs

The hauling of pulpwood (less than 10 inches diameter) and saw logs (logs greater than 10 inches diameter) are transported from the forest to a manufacturing mill via truck and trailer. Pulpwood logs are cut to a length of 8 feet 4 inches or 100 inches, as specified by the manufacturing mills.

Pulpwood logs are generally cross-hauled or perpendicular to the truck and trailer edges. These cross hauled loads are bound to the truck and trailer by chains. The arrangement and securing of chains creates a hazard for the timbermen who load the trucks. Securing these cross-hauled loads is one of the most frequent injuries incurred by timbermen.

During the winter months when the pulpwood logs and the chains that bind them to the truck and trailer are ice-covered, a log can slip out as the ice melts while the load is being transported to the manufacturing mill. A log can bounce off the truck, and create a serious safety hazard on Michigan's highways. In fact, in 1998, and under similar circumstances, a mother and her two-year old daughter were killed when a log hauling truck lost its load on a roadway in the west end of the Upper Peninsula. Since then roughly 100 log spills have occurred, however, none caused serious injury or death.

A new design to the log truck and trailer, called cribbing, has resulted since the accident in 1998. Crib trucks and trailers promote the hauling of logs lengthwise, rather than the traditional cross-hauled, so the ends of the logs are perpendicular to the cab of the vehicle, providing greater stability. In a crib truck, the sides of the log-hauling truck are staked, generally a minimum of two stakes on each side of the vehicle per tier of logs, and the truck is fitted with headboards and bulkheads at the front and back of the trailer, forming a kind of cage.

Under current federal and state laws, the maximum length for a truck and semi-trailer or trailer that is used to transport saw logs, pulpwood, and tree length poles is 70 feet. Generally, the overall length of the crib trucks is longer, at 75 feet, after the safety devices, or cages, are added to both ends. In July of 2003, Governor Granholm approved Michigan HB 4154, Public Act 142 of 2003, which amended the Michigan Vehicle Code to extend the allowable length of log hauling trucks to 75 feet, and revised the tie-down requirements under certain circumstances.

Currently in Michigan, there are tractor trailer combinations that exceed the 70 foot length, these combinations are known as B-Trains. A tractor and two semi trailers make up this combination. Load orientation on a B-Train is the same as the crib trailer; however, a major difference is the B-Train does not have front and rear gates on the trailers. The absence of these gates creates a safety issue in allowing longitudinal shifting of the logs, putting both driver and passing motorist at risk. The load capacity of a B-Train and Crib Trailer are the same. Safety is our main concern; it doesn't make sense to allow the use of B-Trains to operate when a safer option is available. This is where we need your help.

Based on safety considerations, the Michigan Association of Timbermen is proposing an amendment to Section 127(d) of Title 23 of the United States Code, 23 U.S.C. 127 to allow crib vehicles carrying logs to be loaded as described in Michigan HB 4154 and a waiver of the tie-down requirements under 49 C.F.R. 393.116 should be authorized by the US Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. Safety, not vehicle length or truck weight is the key issue.

The Michigan Association of Timbermen will work with other associations, key congressional committees, and individual members of Congress to make these improvements to Title 23, Chapter 1, Subchapter I, Section 127(d) to improve the safe transportation of unrefined forest products from the forest to the first point of processing.

Submitted by

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March 2006