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## SAFETY ALERT

**06-S-9**

### CLOSE CALL WITH LOADED PULPWOOD TRUCK

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[www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/06-S-9.html](http://www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/06-S-9.html)

**BACKGROUND:** An operations forester was inspecting harvesting operations in his pickup truck in the Northeast on a cool winter's day.

**PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:** The 52-year old forester was traveling in a 4WD pickup truck on a logging operation on a winter road. He had 28 years of experience working in the North Woods and was fully trained regarding safe driving techniques on logging roads.

**UNSAFE ACT OR CONDITION:** The forester had pulled over to make a cell phone call. He was monitoring the CB radio for truck traffic on the narrow, ice-covered winter road. A loaded pulpwood truck safely passed his pickup and made an initial run on a moderately steep hill on its way to the mill.

The pulpwood truck was hauling off-highway loads on a private road, and the driver was not as concerned about meeting legal weight or strap requirements. He had only two straps securing his load, and the truck was loaded to about 130,000 pounds gross weight. The load was placed so that much of the weight was at the rear of the trailer, reducing drive wheel traction. Only the drive wheels had chains.

The truck driver made his run for the hill, after first calling on the CB to make sure no empty truck was coming in. Near the peak of the hill, the load shifted, and the truck broke traction. The trucker called for a nearby skidder to help push him up over the hill.

The forester, hearing the CB chatter, drove closer to the truck. He stopped about 100 feet away and assessed the situation. About that time, the trucker made an urgent call over the CB, stating that he could not hold the truck on the hill.

**ACCIDENT:** The truck began to slide backwards on the icy hill. The forester began backing up, but the heavily-loaded truck was picking up speed and was turning sideways on the hill. The forester sped up to avoid the oncoming truck and successfully escaped from the danger zone. The truck came to rest at the bottom of the hill, with the load sideways but upright in the road, and the tractor off the road in the woods.



**INJURY:** The trucker was not hurt, and the truck sustained minimal damage. Since empty trucks and other vehicles were using the busy logging road, the forester strung flagging across the road above the hill to warn incoming traffic and used his CB to warn other vehicles using the road.

Two grapple skidders from the nearby operation pulled the truck back onto the road. After rearranging the load, the truck continued on to the mill without further incident.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:** This incident, which could easily have led to fatalities, demonstrates the importance of using safe following distances, preparing and securing loads properly, as well as the importance of communications protocols on logging roads. FRA's video *Woods Roads Safety* (05-A-6; \$25 to members, \$50 to non-members; specify DVD or VHS format) provides additional guidelines.

*Reviewed by:*  
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*Please follow equipment manufacturers' recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.*