



Collision with Train Injures Log Truck Driver

Reviewed by: Clay Altizer, FRA Southwide Region Manager, caltizer@forestresources.org



SAFETY ALERT • OCTOBER 2022

22-S-10

BACKGROUND

On a Spring morning in the Southeastern US, a log truck driver was starting to transport his second load of the day. The weather was not a contributing factor to the accident, as conditions were clear and dry.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The driver had only been on the job for 17 months; however, he did have previous truck driving experience. The driver was familiar with the route from the woods to the mill since the logging crew had been operating on this tract for some time.

ACCIDENT

The driver proceeded with caution upon approaching the first set of unguarded railroad tracks that crossed the road. After crossing the tracks, the driver traveled approximately one mile before approaching the second set of unguarded tracks. The truck was traveling approximately 45 mph, which was the posted speed limit. The driver began to become distracted as the glare from the sun started to impact his vision, and at this exact same moment, his cell phone began to ring. The driver answered the phone call from his boss while using his hands-free device. Both distractions led to the driver failing to notice the flashing signal lights at the railroad crossing warning of an oncoming train. As the driver began to cross the tracks, the locomotive collided with the cab, causing the train to derail. The locomotive was traveling at a low rate of speed, but the collision caused the truck to spill its load of logs and be pushed approximately 60 feet down the tracks. The owner heard the collision over the phone and, after several attempts to contact the driver, was finally able to connect with him and learn more details about the precise location of the accident.

INJURY

When the business owner arrived at the accident scene, EMS had already started transporting the injured truck driver and locomotive engineer to a regional medical center by ambulance. The truck cab was crushed, but the driver was protected by the heavy-duty headache rack, which prevented logs from penetrating the cab. The driver was admitted to the ICU and diagnosed with four shattered ribs and a liver laceration. He was released from the hospital two days later for an 8-week in-home recovery period. Drug and alcohol screening was negative.

UNSAFE ACTS/ CONDITIONS

- The driver failed to yield the right of way to oncoming train by disregarding the flashing warning signal.
- The driver was operating a moving vehicle while distracted and not paying attention to his surroundings.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Always be aware of your surroundings and avoid any distractions while driving.
- Use "Do Not Disturb" mode or a similar safety feature on smartphones to eliminate the temptation to answer calls or texts while driving.
- Stop a safe distance away from the tracks at railroad crossings to ensure the tracks are clear of oncoming trains.



This Safety Alert analyzes an injury in accordance with the chain of events represented by the five dominoes above. Pioneer industry safety experts H.W. Heinrich and Alfred Lateiner developed this accident analysis system to provide a graphic sense of how injuries can be avoided. Their methodology has been accepted by safety professionals worldwide.

Safety Meeting Report

Topic(s) Discussed:

Comments / Recommendations:

Date:

Company:

Names of Employees Attending:

Meeting Conducted by:

Please follow equipment manufacturers' recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.

signature



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INCIDENT IMAGES



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