



By: Dave Duren, Coordinator – Texas Logging Council

So, I'm driving south bound on U.S. 59, just entering the city limits of Diboll, and on the left, behind the car/truck fuel convenient station, sits a state trooper unit with a loaded log truck. Curiosity gets the better of me, so I made a U-turn to check it out.

I recognize the trooper as one who presents in logger training and education for the Texas Logging Council (TLC), and I pull up beside him as he was walking alongside the log truck trailer. I greet the trooper and ask him how he was doing; you know, the typical cordial greeting. However, since he knows what the TLC is trying to do to promote truck safety, he voluntarily gives me a few details about the stop. He does not name anyone, and I don't even think there is a company name on the side of the door. It's just another log truck going through a typical inspection.

What I learned about the incident really begs the question, HOW and WHY does this stuff keep happening? For three years I've been the TLC's coordinator and heard this statement numerous times, "so and so isn't pro logger trained, doesn't have the proper insurance, and yet they roll into these mills just like the rest of us."

What am I talking about with my question? It turns out the driver of this truck did not have a proper driver's license and, by the way, didn't have one the last time he was stopped in the same truck by the same trooper a month or so ago. The truck and trailer were not registered, and there was no insurance. With the appearance of the tires and the apparent lack of maintenance, I would not have been caught dead in that truck.

Two things are happening here. The State has a revolving door policy when it comes to removing unlicensed drivers from the highways, and some of the area mills have a "look the other way policy," because they are certainly not checking anything.

This past year the conversation in several people's minds has been, "where are we going to find enough trucks to log the mills?" Truck safety is being preached basically from shore to shore in the hopes of stabilizing rising insurance rates threatening the profitability of logging contractors.

How long do you have to dance with a gorilla? Until the gorilla slams you down, or gently releases you. Sometimes, it's hard to tell who the gorilla is.

*The Texas Logging Council is an affiliation of private businessmen and businesswomen who make their living from the harvesting and delivery of wood fiber to forest products mills all over East Texas. Their purpose is to improve and expand the use of professional logging and trucking practices responsive to the needs of customers, employees, landowners and the general public; to provide educational training for members within the logging and hauling professions; and to improve upon worker safety.*

