

A Look at Logger Health and Safety in Maine

Initial findings from the Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety's ongoing study in the state of Maine.

The first project of its kind in the northeast, the Maine Logger Health and Safety Study focuses solely on understanding the health and safety concerns of Maine's loggers. The study is a project of the Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing (NEC), which promotes health and safety research, education, and prevention activities in the high-risk areas of logging, farming, and commercial fishing.

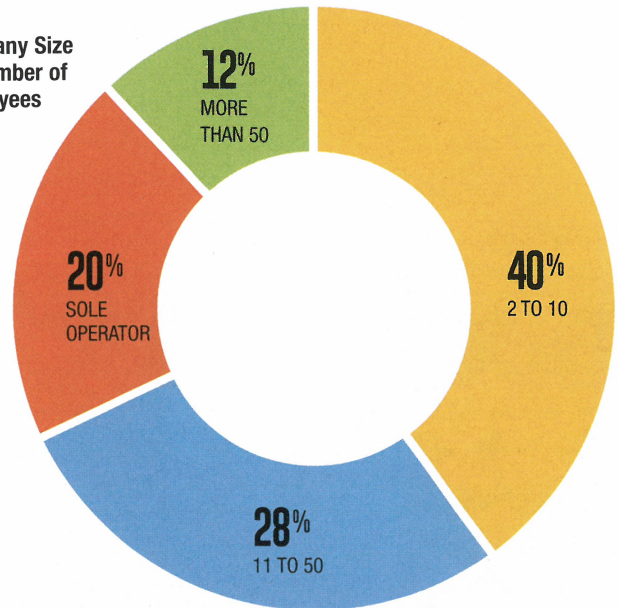
Serving a twelve-state region from Maine to West Virginia, the NEC has an extensive track record of conducting research and developing safety and health solutions for a wide variety of occupational concerns. Its "Lifejackets for Lobstermen" project is currently working to improve lifejacket designs for lobstermen along the coasts of Maine and Massachusetts. Previously, the NEC worked with Mainers to improve ergonomic designs of blueberry rakes and apple buckets. Combining the power of data with the strength of industry partnerships, the Maine Logger Health and Safety Study is the NEC's first major long-term project in the forestry industry of the Northeast.

Nationally, logging is still one of the deadliest professions, with only commercial fishing having a higher fatality rate in 2017, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. The fatal injury rate for loggers is 24 times higher than the all-worker fatality rate. That said, the logging industry varies throughout the United States, and what is happening in one state or region may not reflect what is going on in Maine. The largest logging state in the northeast, Maine was the logical place to start our work.

Survey says...

To better understand the health and safety needs of loggers in Maine, the study team has been conducting quarterly surveys since spring of 2018. All told, 392 loggers have taken part in an initial survey and 307 continue to provide feedback. These loggers hail from all over Maine (see map). The average age of a participating logger is 48, but some are fresh out of high school, and some have worked over 50 years in the industry. Forty-five percent of the study group have logged for 20 years or less, with the other 55% having more than 20 years of experience. While the vast majority of the group are men, there are some women loggers taking part in the project.

Company Size by Number of Employees



A broad representation of the industry.

Different types of logging operations are well represented in the study, with 22% being conventional loggers, 72% mechanized, and another 6% working in both conventional and mechanical logging. The chart above shows the mix of company sizes by number of employees. There are almost 200 unique companies represented in this research. Feedback from such a large and diverse group of loggers strengthens the study findings.

Safety first.

The industry's emphasis on safety is apparent in the project's initial survey results. Over 80% of loggers report that their company has an emergency action plan, with most reviewing the plan each time a worksite changes. Sixty percent of loggers had safety training in the 12 weeks prior to the survey. There are differences in reported percentages of safety training depending on company size, with workers from sole operations or smaller companies (2-10 employees) having safety training less frequently than larger companies (11 to 50, or more than 50 employees). This isn't very surprising, as larger companies often have more resources dedicated to training and other human resources needs.



LISTEN IN: Want to hear from the NEC Team directly about their ongoing research? Listen to the August episode of *The Northern Logger* podcast! We talk health, safety, and what sets logging apart as an industry.



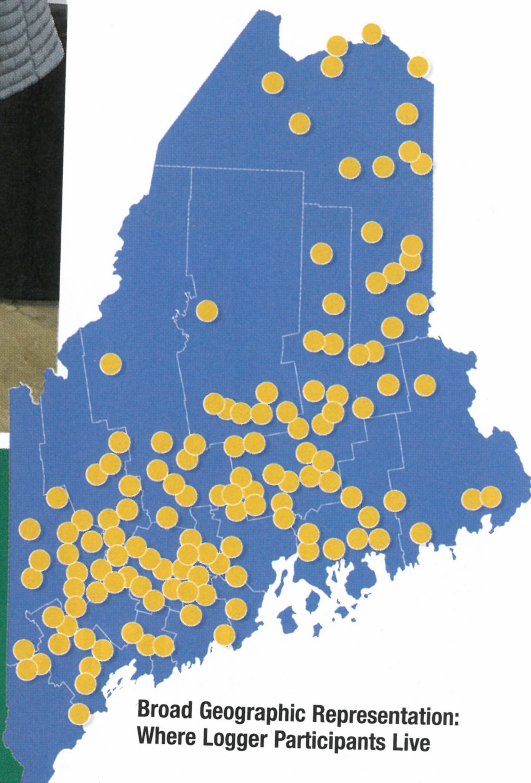
Health & Safety

of the NEC is to
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MORE **ONE** IN **17**
EVERY
LOGGERS REPORT HAVING A WORK-
RELATED INJURY OR ILLNESS IN
THE PAST YEAR.

55%
OF THE STUDY GROUP HAVE LOGGED
FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS



Broad Geographic Representation:
Where Logger Participants Live

THE FATAL INJURY RATE FOR
LOGGERS COMPARED TO THE
ALL-WORKER FATALITY RATE:

24 TIMES
HIGHER

ONE OUT OF **FIVE**
LOGGERS DO NOT HAVE
HEALTH INSURANCE



Health Report

On the health side of things, initial survey findings show that two-thirds of loggers had an annual checkup in the last year. However, one out of five loggers still does not have health insurance. Of all loggers, two out of every five currently experience musculoskeletal

pain. More than one in every 17 loggers report having a work-related injury or illness in the past year.

In addition to learning about Maine loggers through surveys, the project team met over 80 loggers this spring by offering free health screenings around Maine. The researchers and health

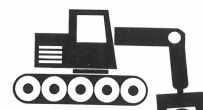
practitioners who provided the health exams received a warm welcome and learned a great deal by talking to the loggers in person. Loggers received a \$25 LLBean gift card for participating in a health screening, which included the following services free of charge:

- Checkup with a doctor or nurse practitioner
- Blood Pressure
- Cholesterol Test
- Blood Sugar Test
- Hearing Exam
- Lung Function Test
- Carbon Monoxide Test (measures levels of CO from smoking)
- Vision Test
- Height/Weight

Many of the health screenings were set up in logging company garages in conjunction with Professional Logging Contractors of Maine Spring Trainings. Two days of free health screenings at the 2019 Loggers Expo in Bangor were also offered. The project team will conduct more free health screenings across the state in spring of 2020.

A major part of this project is sharing the data with the logging community and understanding what loggers feel are the most important issues to tackle next. We'll be holding discussion forums with loggers and industry leaders across Maine to discuss next steps throughout 2020.

You can learn more about this project by visiting www.necenter.org/forestry/research/ or searching @MaineLoggerHealthSafetyStudy on Facebook. Leave us a comment if you have thoughts on the most important health and safety issues for Maine loggers. You can reach out directly to the project team at neclogging@bassett.org or (800) 343-7527.



Maine Logger
Health & Safety Study

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