

Changes in logging safety in the southern United States in response to projected woody biomass demand

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Abstract

Increased bioenergy production from US forests is likely to change logging systems in both subtle and complex ways depending on the form and source of biomass demanded. We examined changes in woody biomass harvesting in the southern United States suggested by the “U.S. Billion-Ton Update”. The analysis of biomass harvesting safety uses current injury statistics to suggest how injury rates and types might be affected. Changes will include more novice workers (the most frequently injured) and increased maintenance tasks (the most frequent injury source). Truck drivers, who are currently underrepresented in logging injury and employment statistics, will also play a larger role. Specialized safety training is proposed to reduce risk as harvesting expands to meet bioenergy demands.