

# Forest Resources Association Technical Release 17-R-10

## WSRI LOGGING PAY AND BENEFITS SURVEY

### INTRODUCTION

As part of a Wood Supply Research Institute project investigating compensation in logging jobs, Forisk Consulting administered a national pay and benefits survey for the industry based on 2015 data. Non-wage benefits are an important component of employee compensation, but we have little information on the types and prevalence of benefits in logging. Here we describe our survey of the logging industry to estimate the types of benefits available to logging employees regionally throughout the U.S.

### ESTIMATION METHODS

We designed a survey to distribute in-person to logging contractors and truck drivers. The survey was printed on the inside of a self-addressed, stamped donation envelope (Figure 1). When sealed for mailing, all responses were hidden from view. Completion instructions were included in the envelope pocket.

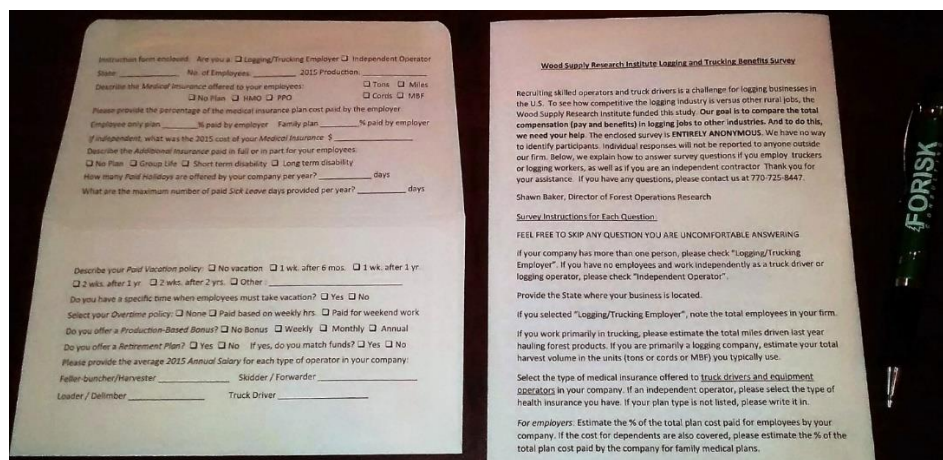


Figure 1. Survey and instructional insert distributed to logging contractors.

The survey gathered data on benefits offered to employees. These included health, life, and disability insurance, retirement plans, overtime and bonus pay, and paid time off. Average annual salaries of workers from 2015 were also collected. We requested information on the state in which the business operated, the number of logging or trucking employees, and the company's 2015 production.

We sent field foresters and procurement managers bundles of surveys and asked them to distribute copies to suppliers they knew. We requested all surveys be returned by the first week of June 2016. There was no way to identify individual participants unless they intentionally included some identifying information, as we did not know who had been provided a copy of the survey.

### RESULTS

We distributed 397 surveys, with the most surveys sent to the South and the fewest to the Northeast (Table 1). Because of the survey distribution method, we don't know how many surveys were actually given to truck drivers or loggers. We received 76 completed surveys from contractors across 12 states. The most responses came from Wisconsin (20), Georgia (15) and South Carolina (11). The number of responses and response rates were highest in regions that received the greatest number of surveys. Unfortunately, no surveys were received from the Northeast. We only received two surveys from independent truck driving contractors, making an analysis of contract log truck driver compensation challenging. The results represent employee log truck drivers of logging companies.

Western contractors had the largest number of employees, while Southern firms had the highest average production. Lake States contractors were smaller, on average than the other two regions.

Production per employee was highest in the South (9,370 tons), followed by the Lake States (6,680 tons) and the West (5,260 tons).

Table 1. Survey responses and respondent information.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Number Sent</b>	<b>Number Received</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>	<b>Avg. No. of Employees</b>	<b>Avg. 2015 Production (Tons)</b>
Lake States	110	23	21%	9	68,600
Northeast	68	0	0%	n/a	n/a
South	130	44	34%	23	204,000
West	89	9	10%	35	116,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>163,300</b>

Salary data from responding companies varied across operators (Table 2). Skidder/forwarder operators earned less than feller-buncher/harvester operators in all regions. Loader/delimiter operators were the highest paid employees in the Lake States and earned roughly the same as loader/delimiter and feller-buncher operators in the South.

Table 2. Average annual salary paid for each operator type on logging operations regionally in the U.S.

	<b>Felling Machine</b>	<b>Skidding/Forwarding</b>	<b>Loader/Delimiter</b>	<b>Log Truck</b>
Lake States	\$43,100	\$39,900	\$48,700	\$44,000
South	\$49,400	\$43,500	\$49,700	\$44,100
West	\$81,300	\$57,600	\$66,200	\$57,200

Reported benefits for logging companies differed between the three regions (Table 3). The West offered access to the highest percentage of all benefits except paid vacation. Southern and Lake States contractors offered similar benefits. Between the South and Lake States, a higher percentage of firms offer access to production bonuses and medical and life insurance in the South.

Table 3. Regional summary of employee benefits offered by responding logging firms. Percentages represent percent of total responding firms in a region which offer the stated benefit.

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>Lake States</b>
Medical Insurance	42%	67%	18%
Life Insurance	12%	22%	0%
Short-term Disability	12%	22%	5%
Long-term Disability	7%	11%	0%
Paid Vacation	72%	56%	73%
Paid Holidays (#)	5	4	5
Paid Sick Days (#)	2	4	1
Paid Overtime	63%	100%	55%
Production Bonus	60%	67%	45%
Retirement Plan	26%	56%	27%

The magnitude of benefits offered between companies varied. Some reported as many as 15 paid holidays. Of the 68% of companies offering vacation, 83% started with one week. Employees needed to work for one year to qualify for vacation at 75% of these firms. Roughly 25% of companies offering paid vacation restricted the timing of when employees could schedule their leave. While only 29% of companies offered access to a retirement plan, 86% of those that did offered a matching contribution. Access to bonuses varied, with some offering weekly, monthly and/or annual bonuses (Table 4).

Weekly bonuses were most prevalent in the South, while annual bonuses were more common in other regions. The Lake States was the only region in which a majority of respondents did not offer a bonus.

*Table 4. Timing of bonuses offered by logging survey respondents.*

	<b>No Bonus</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<i>South</i>	40%	47%	2%	14%
<i>West</i>	33%	22%	11%	33%
<i>Lake States</i>	55%	9%	5%	32%

*\* Values may not sum to 100% as some companies offered bonuses in multiple periods*

These results provide a useful reference for understanding employee compensation in logging. They should be viewed in context, though, as they are a sample of companies willing to participate in the survey. Comparing the average salaries reported in each region to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015 average salary suggests that our average respondent salary is near the top 25% in their region. Assuming the government statistics are more representative of the industry as a whole, the results may be an optimistic estimate of logging compensation.

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