Safety is Number One Priority

Headrick Logging, Anderson, Calif.

By Kathy Coatney

Headrick Logging started out in the small northern California town of Shingletown with a six-man crew and one Cat side. Twenty-six years later, Headrick Logging has become an industry leader in mechanical logging.

Family-owned and operated, Headrick Logging is based in Anderson, Calif. Co-owners Jim and Liz Headrick have 55 employees and harvest timber and biomass for private and public timberlands.

Family Oriented

Liz Headrick says, “We’re family oriented in the sense that we do employ our family. There are kids, brothers, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and we like to help with our employees when they have needs outside of work. That’s something that’s really important to us.”

The employees are considered seasonal, but there are employees who have been with the company for 20 plus years, Headrick says.

10-Hour Days

Another unique feature about Headrick Logging is they work 10-hour days, five days a week.

“We do that partially for costs, but also for increased productivity,” Headrick explained. “I think productivity is a little bit higher when the employee isn’t as worn out the next day, and I think they’re a little bit happier and that makes for safer employees.”

Safety First

Headrick Logging prides itself on safety and strives to exceed safety standards. Ben Snyder, safety/human resources director for the company says safety is the number one priority, and the focus on safety has allowed the company to thrive.

Weekly safety meetings have contributed to fewer accidents and reduced insurance premiums. Safety meetings are held every week to keep employees updated on new information. Even contracted personnel on the jobsite will attend the safety meetings.

“Our subcontractors are required to maintain their own safety programs and also follow our safety guidelines,” Snyder says.

Snyder adds that it’s easy for employees and subcontractors to become complacent when day in and day out nothing ever happens. And that can be dangerous. The safety meetings help ensure that everyone continues to make safety a priority.
“Just because nothing happens for the last 1,000 days straight doesn’t mean the next day isn’t going to get you,” Snyder says. “All it takes is one accident, and you or somebody you work with might not walk out.”

Safety goes beyond looking out for just one employee’s safety. It’s also about the safety of coworkers and for the people coming in later.

“The way they leave the land is a potential hazard. Fallers or whomever is coming in behind them, we don’t want to create a hazard for someone down the line,” Snyder says.

Most of the injuries the company sees are repetitive motion injuries. Headrick Logging has found that the way to combat those injuries is to encourage workers to get up and move around frequently and avoid staying in their seats all day.

“Getting up and actually moving around is important,” Snyder stresses. “You’ll see the guys on the landing getting up and walking around. I encourage them to do that throughout the day. That way they’re not set in that fixed position all day long,” Getting up and moving around also helps keep employees alert.

**Owning and Contracting Equipment**

All of Headrick’s falling is subcontracted out, and although they use their own feller bunchers, they also subcontract out four additional feller bunchers.

Most of the trucking is also subcontracted out, but Headrick Logging does own eight log trucks, two chip trucks, and two lowboys, plus a self loader, dump truck, belly dump, six water trucks, and two shop trucks.

The company has a fleet of equipment that includes:

- Nine dozers: three Cat D7Fs, four Cat D7Gs, a Cat D6H, and a John Deere 850C
- Eight log loaders: two Cat 320CFMs, a Cat 977K, a Cat 320D, a Cat 320C, two John Deere 2054s, and a Hitachi Z210F
- Two wheel loaders: Cat 966C
- Five delimber/processors: two John Deere 2554s, a Cat 320C, a Cat 320CFM, and a Cat 320DFM
- Three feller bunchers: two John Deere 759Gs and a TimberPro TL725B
- 13 wheel skidders: four Cat 525s, three Cat 515s, three John Deere 648Hs, two John Deere 648II, and a John Deere 648III
- Four track skidders: two Cat D5Hs and two Cat 527s
- Four Cat graders: two 120Gs, a 140G, and a 770-A
- Two in-woods Morbark 20 chippers and a Morbark 40/36
Recent additions to the equipment lineup are: Cat 320DFM delimber, TimberPro TL725B feller buncher, Cat 320D log loader, Hitachi Z210F loader, Cat 320C loader, Cat 525 skidder, and Waratah 623C processor.

**Light at the end of the Tunnel**

There have been some tough years, and some of the companies Headrick has worked for have waited to harvest their timber until the economy turned around. But optimism is in the air and the logging market, Headrick says.

Snyder agrees and says this year is looking much better, and things are looking up. He points to Cal Fire signing off more timber harvest plans (THPs) as a sign of improvement. “People are optimistic. It’s looking better for everybody. I think the big scare has kind of passed.”

Headrick is not quite sure what’s driving the market, but she suspects natural disasters may be pushing some of it.

“It’s probably the hurricanes, and it’s probably the fires, and those are bad for people and for the environment to some extent, but they’ve been good for us,” Headrick says, adding that unfortunately natural disasters are just a way of life.

“I would say last year was our best year in probably the last four or five years, and I would venture to say that this year would be equal to that,” Headrick says.

Contributing to their success in 2012 was a large burn they logged in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. “That provided a lot of work for a lot of people,” Headrick says.

**Logging Sides**

At the time of the article, Headrick was running six logging sides (four in McCloud and two in Shingletown) and two chipping sides (one in Westwood and one in Burney).

“One of the jobs we are doing is a full biomass job where the goal is we’re going in there cutting and chipping out sides,” Snyder says.

“The other side we’re running is a top pile side where we’re just cleaning up after logging the site,” Snyder says, adding chipping cleans up the property and offsets the cost of the operation.

At the McCloud logging side, larger trees are being thinned out and harvested to make way for the newer growth. The larger trees consume all the resources (sunlight, water, etc.) and the smaller trees will die if the larger trees aren’t removed.

The larger logs are shipped to Burney Mill. “Everything else 38 inches and under on the butt side is going to Timber Products,” Snyder says, adding larger logs aren’t something they see very often.

The larger logs are beneficial on the trucking and logging side. “We’re shipping fewer logs, but more volume per load,” Snyder says, and that saves time and money.

With a diverse operation, a safe crew, and the recession behind them, it is possible Headrick Logging will be at it for another twenty-six years.