

**Dendro Resource Management, Inc.**  
*provides audit, security and consulting services  
designed to raise the theft and fraud prevention stance of the timber industry.*



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## About Us

With over 23 years' experience in the forest products industry, Dendro Resource Management, Inc. (DRM) is a leader in timber audit services. DRM is committed to supporting the integrity of the forest industry by providing independent analysis and recommendations regarding internal controls as well as actively detecting and documenting theft and fraud incidents. Customer programs can be tailored with your Company's needs in mind. With DRM you are guaranteed independence and confidentiality.

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## Recent Tragedy is a Reminder for us all

As many of you may have heard through the grapevine a forester in California was recently killed while investigating a possible squatter and illegal drug grow.

I'm sure all of us are stunned at this occurring to a fellow forester and we offer our condolences and prayers to the family who was touched by this act of violence. This tragic event reminds us all that the world has gotten more violent and it should also serve as a reminder to be aware of personal safety while working outdoors. This month's newsletter is designed to provide you with more knowledge in self-protection as you go about your work in the field.

Many thanks to Rex Woodson, Corporate Security Manager at Weyerhaeuser, for his willingness to share his law enforcement expertise and insight in preparing this newsletter.

Keep safe,

**Aaron Gilland, DRM, Inc.**



## Safety in the Woods



For foresters, the work place is as big as the great outdoors. Foresters have to be attuned to potential hazards from weather-related threats or disgruntled employees and ex-employees. However, foresters may have to face unique situations that warrant special caution as well.

The perpetrators vary and are sometimes hard to detect. How do you know the

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difference between a friendly but trespassing hiker or hunter and a violent one? Recognizing the difference can make all the difference as to whether the situation dissolves or elevates...whether it blows over or becomes a tragedy. Under the cover of large untraveled land and forests to hide illegal operations it can be especially hazardous when unsuspecting foresters happen upon a problem, far from help or cover.

### **Beware of warning signs**

There are signs that can give some hints about possible dangerous situations. Timber companies should have established policies and procedures in place to prepare employees for unexpected circumstances and should provide regular training to be aware of tell-tale signs of potentially dangerous situations and the proper steps for handling the situation. Regular training will keep those precautions in the front of employees' minds. One tragedy avoided will be worth the effort.

Under most workplace violence policies, employees are responsible for:

- Knowing and complying with the workplace violence prevention standard.
- Taking every threat seriously.
- Reporting any threatening or violent behaviors to leaders.

However, employees aren't required to take action and confront dangerous situations head-on. Even with company training, employees generally aren't trained professionals nor do they have the equipment and back-up to handle dangerous situations, especially in the woods where they can be easy targets.

The best strategy is to be familiar with the warning signs that someone may be using the property illegally so you are forewarned of any potential problems. Here are a few warning signs to note:

- Illegal dumping - To bypass landfill fees some will bypass the waste disposal system and dump material in the most convenient, out of the way place. ...your land. Avoid rummaging through the trash to try to find the dumper. Some dumps are created by drug production and the by-products are lethal. Be especially diligent if you see plastic pots, fertilizer bags, propane tanks, starter fluid cans and cold relief packages. Instead of digging through the dump, report fresh dumps to local law enforcement that are properly trained in identifying the trash.
- Unlocked gates - These are not only an indicator that

there are or may have been trespassers on the property, but could also be a precursor to someone's intention to use the property illegally in the future.

- Heavy traffic patterns across property -- This is especially a problem if there is high activity of unidentified cars coming to the property at strange hours. Thieves and drug dealers oftentimes check out the property first before making their move.
- Signs of Trespassers - Look for new paths into the property, paths around your gates, strange vehicles parked on your property, trash dumps, marking tape you didn't put there, and maybe even fishing line hung in the bushes around your pond that you didn't put there.
- Orphan Tracts -- Be especially diligent about checking orphan tracts that are geographically remote, where access is difficult and you seldom visit. These can be ideal locations for drug activities that seek remote locations to hide their work.
- Posted signs you didn't put up -- These can be "no trespassing" signs or other road signs that could be an indicator someone has "taken over" your property.
- Travel trailers, tents or small mobile homes in out of the way locations - These could be legitimate hunting camps or adventurers seeking the wild and wonderful natural experience or a drug manufacturer that has been brewing his "potion" all day and is now high and usually armed to the teeth.
- Distinctive, obnoxious odors - STAY AWAY.

### **Recommendations**

Rex Woodson graciously shared the following safety steps used in Weyerhaeuser for employee safety training. His first rules center around avoiding confrontations in the first place.

1. **Assess before you approach**. The presence of alcohol or drug paraphernalia are sure signs of unwanted visitors. Although this doesn't necessarily mean you are in danger, if alcohol abuse is in excess, then the chances are increased the perpetrator may become defensive, angry or out of control. If there are signs of weapons, that can mean there is a trespassing hunter or or it can mean there is someone with a gun who intends to protect his stash. If both alcohol or drugs and weapons are present, that is a definite red flag. Just drive on by and call the police.

Be cautious if you see vehicles on your property, especially if

their presence doesn't make sense. The vehicle can be stolen or something worse. Hidden vehicles are another sure sign that the situation could be serious. Vacate the area and report the situation to the authorities.

2. **Avoid and Report.** Remember the old saying, "If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck then it probably is a duck." Use your instincts. They are usually correct. Back off and report the incident.

Let's say that you receive a phone call reporting gunfire or drug use in an area. While your initial instinct might be that it's just a bunch of harmless kids or hunters to check on, are you adequately trained or equipped to deal with something more serious? The safest approach would be to report it to law enforcement and have them check it out first. They are trained and equipped to deal with dangerous incidents of this type."

3. **Use a safe approach.** Determine various scenarios that could happen and then plan for them. Be mentally prepared. That's why training is so important. It's better to remember what was taught at the critical time and not try to figure out what should be done on your own when the situation is in front of you. Make a habit of parking your truck in such a way that you can easily escape whenever you are stopping to inspect a property. Make sure someone knows where you are and how long you anticipate being there. Keep in touch periodically. Be cognizant of cell phone signals or lack of cell phone signals. Plan ahead.

If you unexpectedly come across someone who may look suspicious, be alert and keep these steps in mind:

4. **Use Barriers.** Find something to keep between you and the person. Your vehicle is ideal. It will not only be a natural barrier, but also serve as your way to escape should the situation get tense. Talking over the hood of a vehicle or back of a pick-up truck is natural and provides distance and protection. If you are away from your vehicle, create a comfortable distance and look for other barriers to utilize such as small shrubs, trees, equipment, etc. Even the use of a walking stick can be a barrier when positioned between you and the other party.

5. **Create a Silent Partner.** Make sure the person sees you using your cell phone. This sends a message that someone knows where you are. It creates the sense of your not being alone and that others will know if something happens to you. Indicate your location and the name of the person you are talking to and state that you will meet them in a few minutes. There is strength in numbers, even if those colleagues are a bluff.

6. **Initiate Conversation.** Establish some sort of rapport with the person. Be pleasant and introduce yourself. Talk about common interests like hunting, fishing, weather, etc., if at all possible. Keep your opinions to yourself and avoid controversial topics. If

the other person wants to discuss controversial topics, offer to discuss them later at the office. That will not only put you in a safer environment, it will be your turf and will give the person an opportunity to calm down.

7. **Keep a Safe Distance.** As mentioned before, you should have a general plan in mind. Keep a comfortable distance away and utilize barriers and an escape route planned ahead of time or at least form one when you first meet the person. Beware of nervous or anxious body language:

- Is the person drunk, e.g., loud, boisterous, staggering?
- Are there indications of drug use, e.g., mood swings, hyper activity, etc.?
- Is the person nervous talking to you?
- Is the person visibly and loudly upset with yelling, cursing, getting in your face?
- On the other end of the spectrum, is the individual silent, too quiet, not responding to you?
- Does the person display unusual body language, e.g., acting as if he is hiding something, quivering lips, unusual facial expressions?
- Is the person glancing around as if looking for others?

If you see any of these behaviors, your senses should be raised significantly. Your first approach is to try to diffuse the emotions and anger. You do that by being a good listener. Let the person vent and express empathy. Ask questions and appear interested to establish a dialog. Offer to help. Control your own anger and keep your voice calm and steady. Try not to be defensive. This isn't the time to justify your actions or argue your point. Look for a better location in a controlled environment or make an appointment to talk at another time in a controlled environment. If you can't defuse the anger, your next move is to exit the situation.

8. **Get out of Danger.** At some point you will make the decision that the conversation isn't going anywhere and you need it to end. Make an excuse for leaving. If all else fails, consider using your cell phone as the excuse. Pretend your phone is on vibrate mode and you have to answer it. Try not to show fear. Stay calm and act like everything is normal. Don't turn your back. Walk away at an angle.

Hopefully, no one in your company will face a violent person during the course of performing their duties, but instead of hoping take steps to properly train your staff. Training can be handled by local law enforcement officials, corporate security professionals and even independent third parties. Another good source of information is the nearest Forest Resources Association's Forest Products Security Group meeting. Contact the Forest Resources Association to find an upcoming meeting

near you.

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