

# matsif

## SAFETY LOG

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## What's New for the 2025-26 Fund Year | by Jackie Schummer

The staff has been busy preparing for the 2025-26 fund year. One of the biggest projects is putting together the new Think Safety program. By now, all members should have received the 2026 Think Safety materials including the monthly training topics and the scratch off cards. Please contact the office if your materials have not arrived.

**I am happy to announce that there will be no rate increases for the 2025-26 fund year. Rates for all class codes will remain the same as the current fund year.**

We have completely transitioned to the MATSIF/Trailblazer portal system. This means that all members should process their monthly payroll/premium through the portal system. If you do not currently have a user account, please email [jessie@matsif.com](mailto:jessie@matsif.com) to receive your user account information

and step-by-step instructions for reporting payroll through the portal. Although you will need to use the portal to report your monthly payroll, we still offer the option to mail a check for payment. However, we have found that most members prefer to use the ACH feature on the portal to ensure prompt receipt of payment and avoid late fees due to the uncertainty of the mail system.

For members who are still using the paper periodic premium reports, we understand that this may take some time to get used to. However, I believe that once you complete your first monthly payroll/premium calculation on the portal, you will wonder why you did not make the changeover sooner! It is a simple and efficient way to process your monthly reports. What's more, you have instant access to your monthly worksheets and premium payment history. The portal also offers access to claims information, loss control reports and other MATSIF correspondence. Please contact the MATSIF office if you have any problems transitioning to the new system. We will be happy to walk you through the process.

# W E L C O M E

## New MATSIF Members

- Carrier Land Management Inc.  
*Rogers City*
- Pestka Forestry LLC  
*Ontonagon*
- True North Logging LLC  
*Lachine*
- Ryan's Tree Service Inc.  
*Fairview*



## MATSIF Supports Great Lakes Equipment Expo | Brian LeBoeuf



With the winding down of summer comes one of my favorite events of the year. The Great Lakes Logging and Heavy Equipment Expo. The MATSIF staff attended the events, starting with Wednesday's Earl St. John Education Fund golf outing.

The Earl St. John golf outing is the kickoff for the Expo week. The outing has sold out every year since its inception; this year was no exception. The weather was not as cooperative as we would have liked, but like people in the wood products industry often do, we made the best of the day. The MATSIF staff observed the \$10,000 hole-in-one hole. There were good efforts, however, no hole-in-one was made this year. The event finished with the awards ceremony and good conversation among the participants. The proceeds from the event support the Earl St. John Education Fund. The fund supports Log-a-Load for Kids and the Children's Miracle Network, both worthy causes.

Thursday started the Heavy Equipment Expo. The morning was busy with vendor booths being set up and equipment being put in place. The event opened at noon and was busy the entire afternoon. Thursday evening is the kickoff party for the event.

The Expo starts early on Friday. The MATSIF booth was busy all day. There was a lot of equipment to view, featuring some of the newest technology in forestry. There were also competitions and, of course, plenty of networking. The show was an excellent time to catch up with many MATSIF members. Saturday wrapped up the show. Booths were open all morning for attendees to catch up with the people they missed out on. The show finished with the grand prize drawing. You missed out on a great show if you did not attend the Great Lake Logging and Heavy Equipment Expo. Friday night had parties hosted by vendors that were well attended.

Noteworthy is that on Friday, students were bused to the show to spend the day at the Expo. Experiencing our industry at the Expo is a great way to get young people interested in forestry. I heard many comments from the students about how interesting the equipment is and how excited they were to attend. It is hard to explain to a young person what we do, but seeing the equipment and people involved is a great example.

This show is a special place for me. I have attended at least 20 different expos. From the time I was a child with my family, with previous employers, and now eight shows for MATSIF. Trying to describe the Expo is difficult. The memories will forever be with me. I hope to attend many more in the coming years, and I hope you all do, too.

**ABOVE:** MATSIF STAFF OVERSEES THE HOLE-IN-ONE.





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** PONSSE PARTY; BRIAN LEBOEUF; BRZOZNOWSKI TRUCK; SHAMCO INC. TRUCK; RICHARD STRINGER, RETIRED MATSIF EMPLOYEE; THE ANDERSON FAMILY.

## MATSIF Says Farewell to Charter Member



We were saddened to hear of the recent passing of John Sivula, 94, of Nathan, MI. John was one of MATSIF's charter members, and one of the driving forces in getting legislation passed to allow group self-insurance in Michigan. Fifty-two years ago, John, along with twenty-seven other individuals, took a gamble by pledging their assets so that MATSIF could become a reality.

Here is what John said back in 1974. "We had a fight and a lot of hurdles to cover. I was a teeny bit scared to sign on because I didn't know what was going to

happen. But I was teed off at high workmens' comp and I said I was ready to fight it, and I did!" MATSIF is happy that John did! John was a man of great vision, who seized the opportunity to be a part of paving the way for affordable work comp insurance for businesses in the wood products industry.

John owned and operated John Sivula Logging & Construction in Daggett for many years. This company is still in business today, now run by John's sons, Matt, John "Jay" and Andrew. This company has been insured with MATSIF ever since John signed on in 1974.

***"Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"***



## Back Injury Awareness | by Rick Dessellier



This year's Logging Expo and Earl St. John Golf outing were both successful. I was fortunate to attend, and to work these events on behalf of MATSIF. This gives me the opportunity to meet up with MATSIF members and some potential new members. The weather was not ideal at either event, but this did

not deter hardy forest products people.

As the fall weather progresses, we need to be aware of the new hazards that come along with it, and make adjustments to protect employees and ourselves. One of the most severe injuries can be to the back. Usually associated with slips, trips and falls, back injuries can also come by way of falls from heights, improper lifting techniques, exposure to vibration, repetitive movement, or sitting in jarring equipment with no seatbelt use. Any of these can cause strains, sprains, herniated discs, fractures, and spinal cord damage.

### COMMON LOGGING BACK INJURIES:

- **Strains and sprains** – Damage to muscles, Tendons, or Ligaments. Often caused by improper lifting or sudden twisting. This can be common when working with heavy equipment parts or tires.
- **Herniated disc** – Can result from heavy lifting or wear and tear over time. Know when something is too heavy and get help to assist with lifting.
- **Fractures** – Bone breaks that can occur with significant falls. Be aware of footing when working at heights. Examples include securing load chains, tarps, and working on ladders.
- **Traumatic injuries** – Sudden incidents, including falls or contact with equipment, leading to spinal cord damage. Wearing a seatbelt in equipment will reduce these injuries as you are not able to come out of the seat, and it will absorb most of the shock from sudden jarring, such as contact with a stump, rocks, etc.

- **Chronic Conditions** – Long-term pain and disability can arise from repetitive motions, vibration and uneven terrain involved with logging, or job tasks.

Back injuries can occur in all areas of the forest products industry partially due to the physical nature of the industry. There are steps we can take to help prevent, and work within our capabilities, extending our capacity to continue working.

### PREVENTION STRATEGIES:

- **Proper Lifting Techniques:** Bend at the knees, keep objects close to the body, and tighten stomach muscles to use leg support, not your back.
- **Reduce Repetitive Motion:** Alternate physically demanding tasks with easier ones to avoid overusing the spine.
- **Take Breaks:** Regular breaks are essential, especially if your job requires sitting for long periods in a vibrating machine.
- **Maintain a Healthy lifestyle:** Regular exercise to strengthen core and back muscles can help, along with maintaining a healthy weight.
- **Use Proper Equipment:** Wear appropriate PPE and utilize lifting devices when possible.
- **Work Smart:** Avoid awkward postures and pay attention to body mechanics to reduce strain on the back.

Again, be aware of your working conditions along with the surfaces you are working on; they can change drastically in a short time. Also be aware of the potential hazards you are creating and your responsibility for removing those hazards. What may not look like a problem from a piece of equipment can be detrimental to a person walking!

Let's work on having a great, safe, and incident-free fall, and enjoy the colors and opportunities presented to us.



# New Hire Orientation

by Mike Kline



Employee turnover has become a big issue not only in our industry but in all industries across the board. I had to deal with it before I came to MATSIF, and I am sure that all of you have had to deal with it as well. Believe me, I wish that I could tell you how to fix this problem but I am at a loss. With this

turnover comes a very important step in the hiring process, "New Hire Orientation." This can become a tedious task with a revolving door of employees. As we are walking new employees through the process, we can't help but wonder how long is this one going to stay. It is this thought that we need to put out of our minds and focus on making every orientation the best that we can.

Most of you are probably wondering what new hire orientation has to do with safety, but it is this first time with a new employee that we must show them how focused on safety that we are as leaders. Looking back at the past year for MATSIF we saw quite a few injuries to employees on the job less than a year, and this has been the case for a few years. Hopefully you all agree with me that safety is a culture that starts at the top, but it requires buy-in all the way down through all employees. That is why it is so important to emphasize safety during new hire orientation and show new employees just how important their safety and the safety of all employees is to you.

When it comes to a new employee's first day on the job, we must realize that the orientation is not just a short meeting that might last less than an hour, but it is a process that can last a while. When a new hire first sits down to meet with you, that might only last an hour. However, it will take much longer to complete the full orientation process so they are ready to be left alone to work. There are a lot of things to go over and papers to sign during this first meeting, but make sure that you spend an adequate amount of time on your safety program and what your safety expectations are of all employees. After this meeting is where most people think the orientation stops, but that is not the case. Usually, this is the time you pass the new employee off to a supervisor or another trusted employee to show them the ropes.

We will call this next person in the orientation process your orientation assistant. This person should have a good knowledge of your company and how things work. It will be their job to help mold your new employee into a valuable member of your team, but the first thing they should do is show the new employee around. I think that we can all agree that in our industry we have a lot of dangerous equipment and areas that can pose safety issues as well. Now is the time to show and explain these dangers and how

to avoid them to the new employee. Another attribute that your assistant MUST have strong support of the safety system. After all, they will be the one training and setting the example for your new employee. The new employee should work closely with the assistant until they are comfortable with all aspects of their new job. Now hopefully you do not think that your role in the new hire orientation is over because it is not. You need to check in with your assistant to see how things are going and even more importantly you need to talk with the new employee as well. It is important to let them know that you value them and are willing to listen to any concerns that they might have.

It is hard to continually put a great deal of effort into a new hire orientation when we have become accustomed to new employees only staying a short time, but we must show new employees that we genuinely care about them and their well-being. Emphasize to them the importance of safety, show them the danger areas so that they are aware of them from the start, and most importantly, lead by example and follow your own safety rules. I know that if done correctly this process takes time, but if we follow through on the entire process, not only will we be creating a safer working environment and cutting down on injuries to new hires, but maybe we will create a culture where the employees feel accepted and secure and are less likely to want to leave.





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## SAFETY LOG

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## TREES

Our Renewable Resource



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# THINK SAFETY

## 2025 SECOND CHANCE 3RD QUARTER WINNERS

- |  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| ■ Joshua Hardy<br><i>Usher Sawmill</i>             | ■ Brody Hasse<br><i>Component Solutions</i>           | ■ Fred Gribbell<br><i>Northland Harvesting</i>       | ■ Sydnee Poortenga<br><i>West MI Sawmill</i>          |
| ■ Matthew Sivula<br><i>John Sivula Logging</i>     | ■ Donald Wangerin<br><i>Wangerin Logging</i>          | ■ Scott Kohlhoff<br><i>Devereaux Sawmill</i>         | ■ Matthew Riley<br><i>Dyers Sawmill Inc.</i>          |
| ■ Kathy Steiger<br><i>Blaze Timmins Forestry</i>   | ■ Kalli Fuhr<br><i>Welch Land and Timber</i>          | ■ Gerrett Glazier<br><i>Bunker and Sons Sawmill</i>  | ■ Robert Kirbitz<br><i>Shawn Muma Logging</i>         |
| ■ Mike Touchinski<br><i>Triest Forest Products</i> | ■ Mike Drake<br><i>Cleeves Premium Lumber Company</i> | ■ Tim Neff<br><i>AJD Forest Products</i>             | ■ Scott Fisk<br><i>Atwood Forest Products</i>         |
| ■ Sherry Warlin<br><i>Minerick Logging</i>         | ■ Travis Rye<br><i>Maple Transport Inc.</i>           | ■ Donald McGahan<br><i>Great Lakes Nursery Soils</i> | ■ Tyler Galbo Squires<br><i>Doyle Forest Products</i> |
| ■ Erik Santti<br><i>Santti Brothers Inc.</i>       | ■ Bryan Ellis<br><i>Loaderup</i>                      | ■ Brian Kelsey<br><i>Allen Bradley Interiors</i>     | ■ Jason Misner<br><i>Central MI Hardwoods</i>         |
| ■ Zach Anderson<br><i>Kells Wood Products</i>      | ■ Keith Crosby<br><i>Comins Lumber Sales</i>          | ■ Travis Wolfe<br><i>JW Woodruff Forest Products</i> |   |