

Log bucking

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Bucking is the process of cutting a felled and delimbed tree into logs.^[1] This can be a complicated process because logs destined for plywood, lumber, and pulp each have their own price and specifications for length, diameter, and defects. Significant value can be lost by sub-optimal bucking. Cutting from the top down is *overbucking* and from the bottom up is *underbucking*.

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Methods

A felled and delimbed tree has to be cut into logs of standard sizes. This process is called *bucking*, and logger who specialises in this job is a *buck sawyer*.

Bucking may be done in a variety of ways depending on the logging operation. Trees that have been previously felled and moved to a landing with a log skidder are spread out for processing. While many of the limbs have broken off during transport, the remaining limbs and stubs have to be trimmed. The buckler will anchor the end of an auto rewinding tape measure which is attached to his belt and walk down the log trimming as he goes. The tape is anchored gently with a bent horseshoe nail in the bark so it can be jerked loose when the measurement is completed. When a suitable place to buck the tree is located the cut is made. Local market conditions will determine the particular lengths cut. It is common for log buyers to issue purchase orders for the length, diameter, grade, and species that they prefer and will accept. On the West Coast common cuts on a large Pine or Fir tree is three 32's and a 10. There are often different prices for different items. The buckler is the one who turns a tree into logs, and to do his job properly must cut the tree for optimum value. Significant value may be lost by sub-optimal bucking.^[2]

The person bucking is generally called a *bucksawyer* or *bucklogger*, or just a *bucker* and runs as many saws as he can, switching out saws as soon as one is dull. The reason for this is the bucksawyer is typically paid per section of log he cuts. Generally you will find a bucklogger at the smaller sawmills that aren't fully mechanized. This part of the logging process is perhaps more dangerous than the actual felling of the trees for the bucklogger is usually cutting from the edge of a treepile which can be twenty



Bucker measuring and swamping or knot bumping



Bucker - Making the Cut

feet high and as long as there is room to dump them from the truck. Each tree has to be picked out of the pile and cut so that a controlled fall of more trees can be worked as the former fall has been cut and skidded to its respective pile.

Bolts, billets and rounds

The pieces of bucked logs may be known by several names. *Bolts* are the pieces of a log which has been bucked into specific lengths which are less than 8 feet (2.4 m),^[3] especially short lengths. The etymology of *bolt* is related to being short and stout and related to *knock*, and *strike* possibly because bolts were traditionally split into wood shingles, treenails, clapboards, etc. These pieces may be more specifically known as peeler, shingle, stave or pulpwood bolts.^[4] *Billet* is variously defined as a short piece of *round* or partially round wood usually a smaller diameter than a *block* or bolt^[4] or as a piece split or cut from a bolt, or sometimes synonymous with *bolt*, particularly when the pieces are intended as firewood (fuel) and sometimes means a piece of a billet after it has been split. *Round* is often associated with lengths of un-split firewood.

See also

- Chain saw
- Felling
- Hewing
- Limbing
- Logging

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