

MADISON'S LUMBER REPORTER

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News & Updates

Logging Truck Accidents

A sudden flurry of accidents involving log trucks on Canadian and US highways this week prompts *Madison's* to remind readers that safety is ALWAYS the priority.

In British Columbia, Highway 16 was reduced to single-lane alternating at Upper Fraser Road, 20 kilometres east of Prince George, BC, December 6 where a logging truck spilled its load. No one was injured in the mishap.

Williams Lake, BC, RCMP were dispatched Monday to a complaint a logging truck had lost its trailers on Highway 20 at South Lakeside Drive.

"Officers attended and found a tractor trailer parked in the outside lane of the highway," said Insp. Warren Brown. "The logging truck trailers had detached from the power unit and were blocking the lane of traffic."

Brown said the trailers had detached during motion.

A tow truck was used to lift the trailers and re-attach them to the truck.

The damage is estimated at \$700 to \$800 because two metal supports were bent.

Police said no other vehicles were involved in the incident and there were no injuries.

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Housing Starts, Canada

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp said Monday housing starts declined to an annualized rate of 192,235 in November, 3 per cent lower than October's result and about 3,000 fewer than economists expected.

Most of the weakness was concentrated in Ontario, which saw a drop of 16.6 per cent, and in Atlantic Canada, where starts fell by a whopping 24.8 per cent. But condo building in British Columbia drove starts there up 12.5 per cent and the Prairies and Quebec saw gains of 9.1 per cent and 0.8 per cent respectively.

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US Home Foreclosures, FHA Budget Shortfall

The number of US homes entering the path to foreclosure or winding up repossessed by lenders has fallen to levels not seen in more than six years. The trend is the latest sign foreclosures are becoming less of a national factor on the housing recovery and more of a state and metropolitan-area concern.

Lenders initiated foreclosure action against 52,826 US homes in November, down 10 per cent from the previous month, and a drop of 32 per cent from November last year, according to new data from foreclosure listing firm RealtyTrac Thursday.

The last time the tally of monthly foreclosure starts was lower was in December 2005, the firm said. Foreclosure starts increased last month on an annual basis in 15 states, including Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and Oregon.

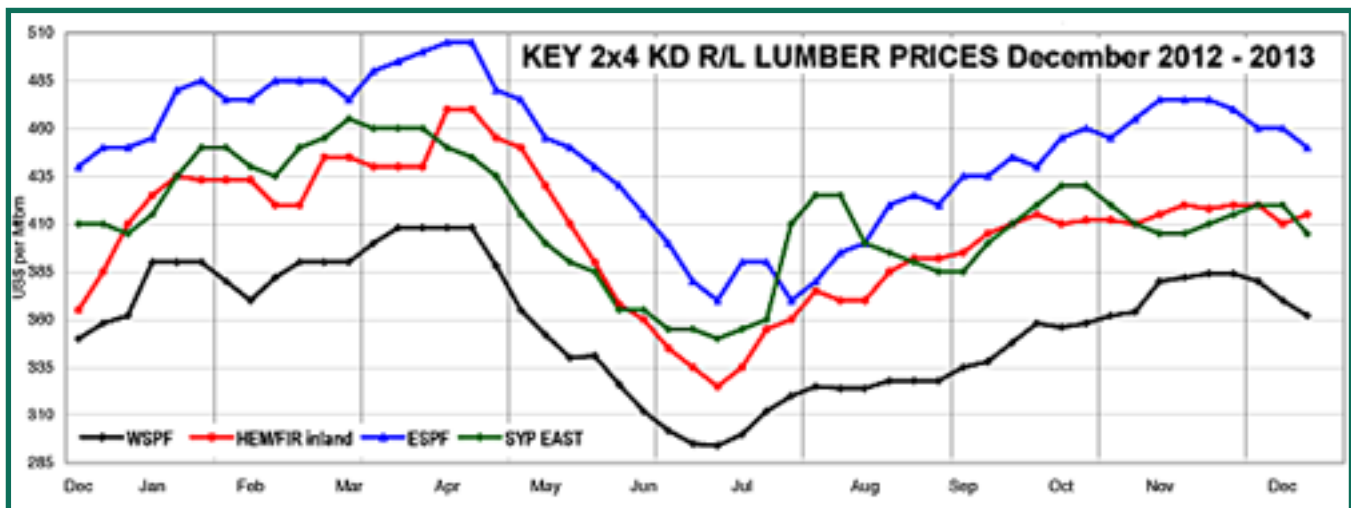
While fewer homes entered the foreclosure pipeline in November, the number of homes completing the foreclosure process also declined.

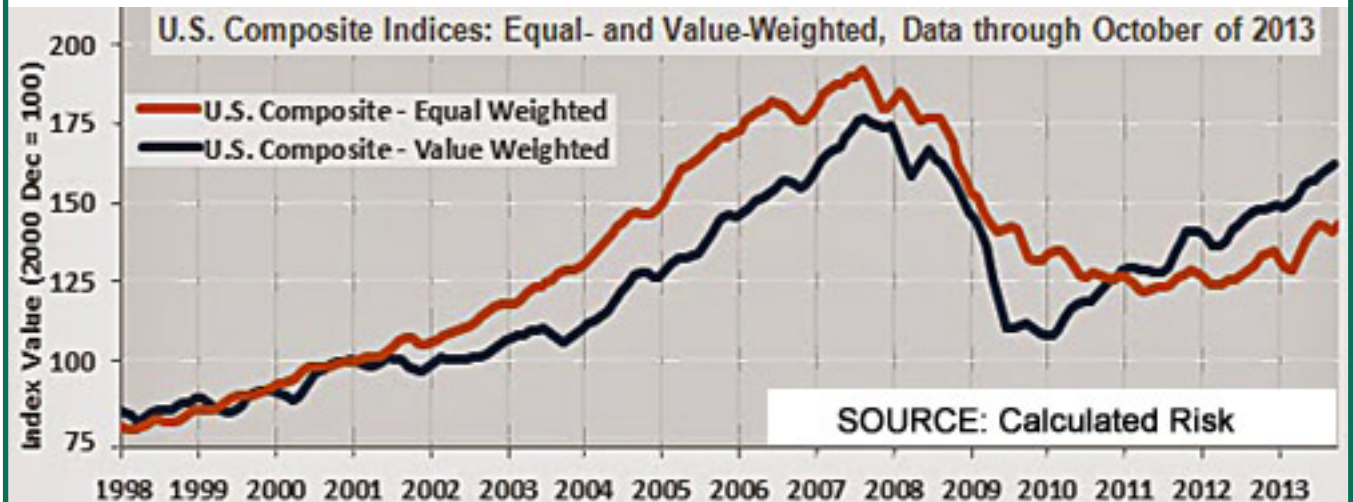
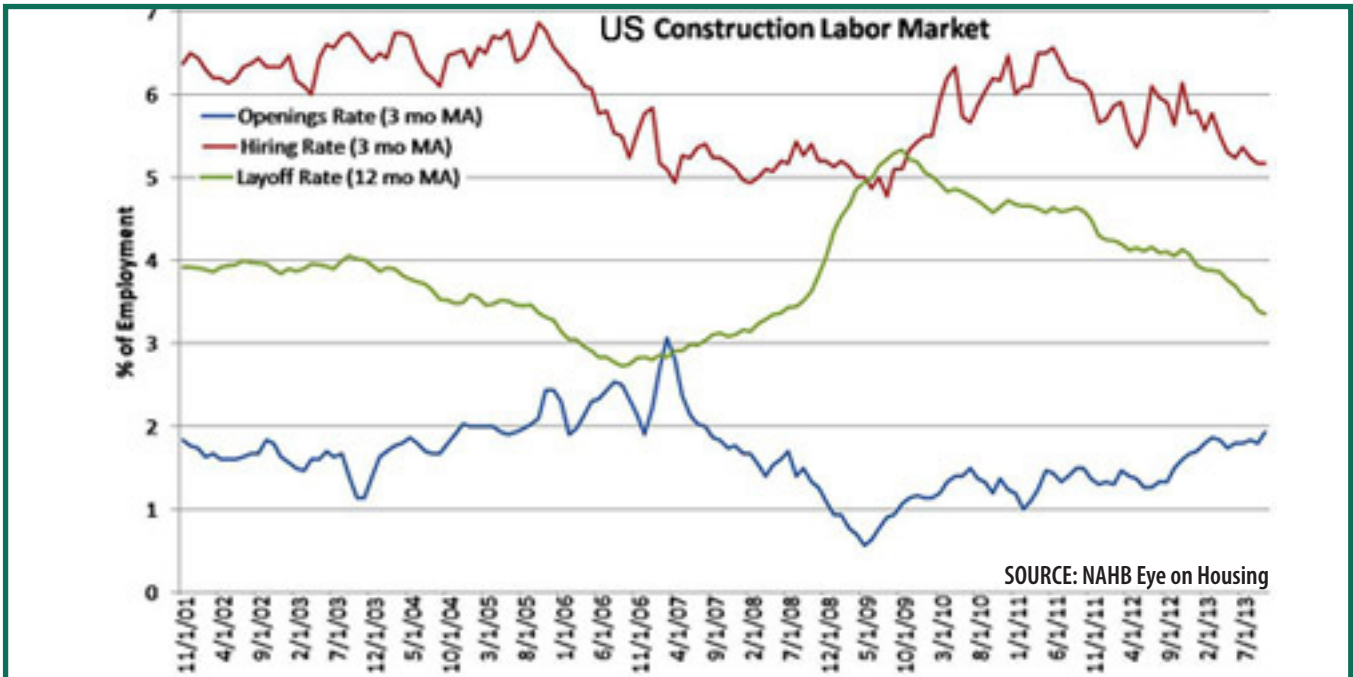
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Advances in Biomaterials Technology

There have been some great breakthroughs and new funding announcements in recent months in the exciting field of biopolymers and biomaterials.

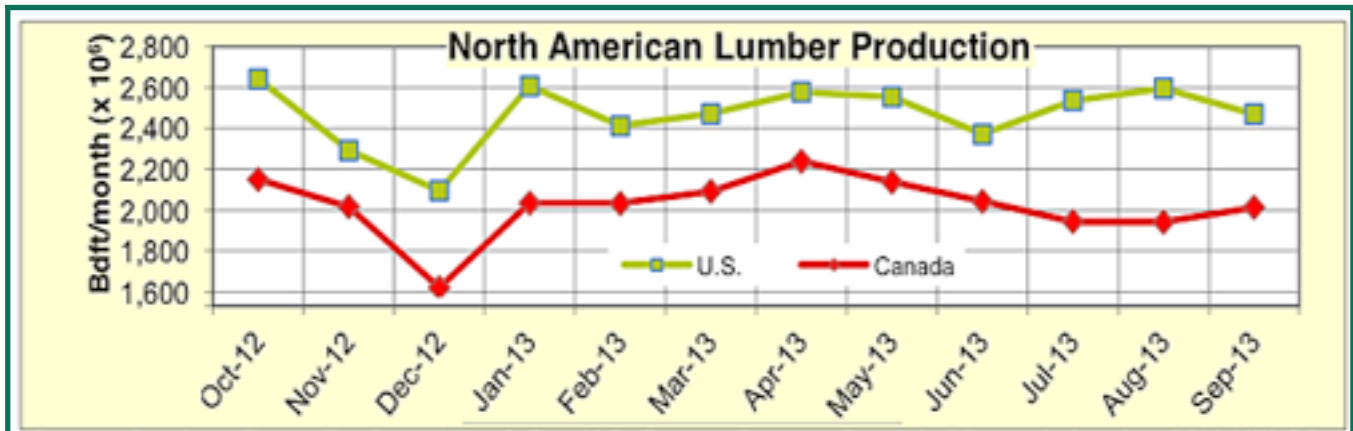
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From CoStar: Commercial Real Estate Prices Resume Upward Trend in October

The two broadest measures of aggregate pricing for commercial properties within the CCRSI—the value-weighted U.S. Composite Index and the equal-weighted U.S. Composite Index—advanced by 1.1% and 1.4%, respectively, in October 2013. ... On an annual basis, the equal weighted CCRSI Composite Index has risen 7.4% while the value-weighted Composite CCRSI Index has advanced by 9.5%.



Source: Southern Forest Products Association, U.S. Census Bureau, Council of Forest Industries-CAN, WWPA

Key Prices

	This Week	Last Week	Change	Month Ago	Change	Year Ago	Change
WSPF KD R/L 2x4	362	370	-8	384	-22	362	0
WSPF KD R/L 2x6	340	352	-12	366	-26	386	-46
WSPF KD R/L 2x8	330	336	-6	354	-24	362	-32
WSPF KD R/L 2x10	422	438	-16	448	-26	368	+54
WSPF KD PET 2x4 Stud	290	310	-20	325	-35	325	-35
WSPF KD PET 2x6 Stud	290	305	-15	315	-25	305	-15
Douglas Fir Green R/L 2x4	330	325	+5	345	-15	300	+30
Douglas Fir Green R/L 2x10	500	500	0	540	-40	328	+172
ESPF KD 2x4 8ft Stud	370	375	-5	385	-15	390	-20
OSB Ontario 7/16" (CDN\$)	220	230	-10	223	-3	335	-115
CSplywood Toronto 3/8" (CDN\$)	386	386	0	378	+8	410	-24

Weekly News

Log Truck Accidents, Fatalities

CONTINUED An accident involving a logging truck and a pick up shut down the highway south of Nelson, BC, Thursday morning.

The accident happened when an elderly woman was pulling out of a side road onto the highway. It's not sure whether the woman did not see the loaded logging truck or thought there was more time to get ahead of the 18-wheeler.

However, the logging truck driver, realizing his rig would collide with the woman's vehicle, went into evasive mode before clipping the pickup truck and landing in the ditch.

Nelson Fire Department reports "luckily there were no injuries" in the incident that caused significant damage to the pick-up truck and saw the logging truck completely blocking both lanes of Highway 6.

In the US, a support bunk snapped on a logging truck belonging to M&M Transport of Chehalis, WA, Tuesday, losing its entire cargo of logs.

The accident is under investigation by the Olympia, WA, Police Department, spokesperson Laura Wohl said.

An officer at the scene said no other vehicles besides the M&M Transport truck were involved, and no one was hurt.

The officer noted that the entire load of logs was still chained together, so that logs were not loose or in danger of rolling. The support bunk on the truck bed was snapped to one side, however, which appeared to be the cause of the accident.

A Georgetown, SC, man died in a head-on crash with a logging truck in just before noon Wednesday.

The incident happened when a 1990 Chevrolet pick-up truck was heading north on the road and crossed the center line, said Cpl. Sonny Collins of the SC Highway Patrol.

A 2000 International truck that was hauling a full load of logs was heading south and the two vehicles collided head on, Collins said.

The logging truck driver was transported to MUSC in Charleston, SC, for treatment.

No charges are anticipated against the driver of the logging truck, Collins said.

A Windsor, NH, man was airlifted with serious injuries Wednesday morning after his vehicle collided with a logging truck on Route 202 in Bennington, NH.

Christopher Davies, 32, was driving his 2003 Ford F250 southbound when police believe he drifted into the northbound lane and struck a 1998 West Star logging truck.

Police did not say why they believed Davies may have drifted into Kimball's lane, though they did say road conditions were slick Wednesday morning.

Kimball was not injured in the crash. Kimball's truck sustained minor damage to the wheel area of the driver's side of his vehicle and Davies truck was a total loss.

Back on the west coast, Eugene-Springfield firefighter medics in Oregon responded Wednesday evening to a logging accident in a remote area off Quartz Creek Road, south of Highway 126.

The unidentified patient is an adult male who sustained a lower leg fracture, officials said.

No additional information was immediately available.

Canada Housing Starts

CONTINUED Nationally, Novem-

ber's pullback was evenly distributed between single family homes, down 3.1 per cent to 111,036 units last month, and multiples which declined 3.5 per cent to 60,311 units.

In raw numbers, not annualized, there were 17,153 actual starts in November, down from 18,173 in November 2012.

Urban starts decreased by 3.4 per cent on a seasonally adjusted annual rate, while rural starts were flat.

Home Foreclosures, US

CONTINUED All told, lenders took back 30,461 homes last month, down 19 per cent from October and a decline of 48% from November last year, RealtyTrac said.

Overall, completed foreclosures sank to the lowest level since July 2007, the firm said.

The number of homes repossessed by banks increased on an annual basis in only five states: Delaware, Maryland, Connecticut, Maine and Iowa — all states where the courts must sign off on foreclosures, a factor that typically draws out the process.

Some of the decline in foreclosure activity last month was due to a seasonal slowdown as the end of the year draws near.

Meanwhile, The Federal Housing Administration, which recently received an infusion of funds from the U.S. Treasury to cover projected losses, still faces a US\$1.3 billion capital shortfall, an independent audit released on Friday found.

The annual analysis calculates the solvency of the FHA's mortgage insurance fund under a range of economic assumptions.

The government mortgage insurer received a US\$1.7 billion infusion from the Treasury in September, marking the first time in its 79-year history it has needed aid.

Industrial Biomaterials Programs

Globally

A couple of recent announcements in Canada bode well for the future of biomass projects, whether materials or fuel.

The Industrial Biomaterials program, a new initiative that will help create more fuel-efficient vehicles and greener construction materials, is a \$55-million, five-year initiative launched in Canada in November to encourage firms to transform agricultural and forestry by-products into new materials.

Bioresins, biofibres, and biocomposites made from Canadian non-food biomass such as wood, lignin, grain husks, flax, and hemp stems will be developed as part of the programme, which is receiving a \$30 million investment from the National Research Council (NRC), along with an additional \$25 million generated through collaborative projects with industry, academic institutions and other government departments.

“Agricultural and forestry by-products will be integrated into new materials, which will ultimately reduce the use of petroleum-based polymers,” said John McDougall, President of the NRC.

The programme will also help Canada’s transportation and construction industries remain competitive in global markets by ensuring that automotive parts manufacturers and green building material suppliers can adopt these technologies.

One excellent result of this funding is progress in the manufacturing of the structural insulated panel, or SIP, a wooden building material that could be used instead of wood studs + batt insulation in home construction.

Armand Langlois, head of Enerlab, the Quebec company developing the lignin structural panels, believes Canadian companies, especially small firms like his 12-employee shop, could never take on such projects without help from institutions such as the NRC and Montreal’s École Polytechnique.

Well before the formal launch of the biomaterials program, Enerlab was working with the NRC to overcome such obstacles as lignin’s variability between species, and even between regions. Now the company is seeking patents and hopes to begin sales next spring of insulated boards containing up to 25 per cent lignin. Production of SIPs and spray foam will follow.

Enerlab is part of a group of manufacturers working with the NRC and the Alberta government to develop a technical guide for SIPs that should ease the concerns of building code authorities.

SIPs are a high performance building system for residential and light commercial construction. The panels consist of an insulating foam core sandwiched between two structural facings, typically OSB. SIPs are manufactured under factory controlled conditions and can be fabricated to fit nearly any building design. The result is a building system that is extremely strong, energy efficient and cost effective.

SIPs can be used for exterior walls, foundations, frost walls, roofs, and floors.

The brown wafers at top and bottom are oriented strand board. The creamy filling, uninterrupted by the 2x4s and 2x6s that act as energy-robbing thermal bridges in traditional walls, is polyurethane foam, a plastic made from petrochemicals and lignin.

Lignin is the substance that binds fibres and cells in trees and other plants. After cellulose, it’s the most abundant organic polymer on earth. That makes it the world’s second-most common renewable carbon source.

Environmentally, SIPs offer benefits in reducing the need for petrochemicals as base ingredients. And since products made from biomaterials can be lighter than traditional plastics, there are further energy savings in their installation and use.

“These biomaterials promise to be as safe as the materials currently in use by industry, inexpensive to produce, and the ideal lightweight technology for the automotive and construction sectors,” said McDougall in announcing the project.

Economically, they can open new markets for sectors such as forestry, which is an \$80 billion-yearly industry in Canada.

Durability of the panels is currently the key focus. Tests will be set up to mimic the effects of years of humidity changes, vibration, and other forces. Within six months, frames will be in place to allow the testing of full SIPs sandwiches, and not just the bite-sized pieces being assessed now.

Elsewhere, the US Department of Agriculture late last year awarded US\$120 million worth of grants for cellulosic bio-fuels and high value applications for lignin in plastics. Wood is roughly 15-35 per cent lignin depending on species, with the rest being cellulose and hemicellulose.

One hundred billion lb/year of lignin is separated globally as a byproduct of wood pulping, according to *Plastics Engineering* November 12, 2012. Only 2 per cent of

that is sold commercially, however, for things like stabilizers in asphalt and dispersants in concrete and textile dyes; 98 per cent is burned internally by pulp mills for energy. An infinitesimally small amount of the commercial 2 per cent is used in plastic, mostly thermosets and adhesives.

Recently, however, three new lignin-content plastic technologies have appeared. Two are thermoplastic; one is thermoset. Two are going commercial, which is astonishing given the difficulties and limited supply of usable lignin, said *Plastics Engineering*.

Not to be left behind, a consortium of European companies is researching and developing forest-based biocomposites as alternatives to traditional construction materials, announced *PlastEurope* November 19. The Osirys Project will develop products for facades and interior partitions that can be used in new builds or retrofitted. The four-year project will work with new eco-friendly building materials to develop a holistic solution to the emissions challenges currently facing the construction industry. Indoor air quality and emissions have presented a major challenge in recent decades for scientists, industry, and consumers as conventional materials contribute to contaminants, such as volatile organic chemicals (VOCs), formaldehyde, says *PlastEurope*. The new materials are to improve air quality by eliminating microorganisms, increasing thermal and acoustic insulation and controlling breathability.

According to Osirys, thermoset epoxy resins based in forest wastes and thermoplastic lignin-base polymer will be reinforced with natural fibres such as wood, flax, and hemp. In addition, cork granules will be used for insulation performance. The project has now launched a website which hosts information and news on developments throughout its lifespan. Chris Hare, technical manager at UK-based NetComposites, one of the consortium members, says: “We anticipate many interesting discussions between partners and the public across many platforms, and look forward to results which will benefit industry and users alike.”

The research has received funding from the European Community’s “Seventh Framework Programme”. The consortium comprises 18 companies from the UK, Spain, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Italy, and Portugal.

by Kéta Kosman