

Testimony

By

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February 12, 2002

Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health Testimony on
Ecoterrorism and Lawlessness on National Forests

Washington, D. C.

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Mr. Chairman and committee members:

I am Michael S. Hicks, Northwest Oregon Area Logging Manager for Boise Cascade Corporation. Boise Cascade owns or controls over 2.3 million acres of forest land using science based, state-of-the-art forestry practices. In addition to being a major distributor of office products and building products, Boise Cascade also manufactures building products and paper products to meet the demands of the American public. Over 19,000 people work for Boise Cascade in the United States.

My area in Monmouth, Oregon is part of the Western Oregon Region with the regional office located in Medford Oregon. In my position as Logging Manager, I am responsible for obtaining a reliable source of log supply for our three Northwest Oregon veneer mills. The logs are obtained from our own lands, from contracts sold by a number of government and private sellers, and from open market log deliveries. My responsibilities also include the management of 160,000 acres of timberland and management of a staff of 25 to 30 professional foresters and biologists. Our office is a field office, primarily housing field foresters, engineers, field biologists, and administrative support staff.

Thank you for allowing me to provide my testimony on domestic terrorism. The title of this hearing is *Ecoterrorism and Lawlessness on National Forests*. However, from my perspective, we are dealing with just plain TERRORISM AND LAWLESSNESS. It really does not matter what the cause is, or how one's actions are justified. There is no prefix anyone can put before the word terrorism that justifies a cause. We are a nation of laws and due process. Terrorism is terrorism, plain and simple.

I am here today to relate my experience with *domestic terrorism*, as I call the activities that were carried out against our company. It was Christmas morning, 1999 and this was to be the first time my wife and I would enjoy the chance to sleep in on Christmas morning since the 1970's. However, the phone rang at about 5:15 A.M. It was our local Boise Cascade Employee Relations Manager telling me our office was on fire.

Needless to say, my string of early awakenings on Christmas morning remained intact. This time, however, it wasn't because of kids or grandkids running around to see what Santa and his elves had brought. As we found out a few days later, it was elves of a different stripe. The evil and cowardly elves of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) had brought their gift of terror to our lives. ELF, through their spokesperson at the time, Craig Rosebraugh, claimed responsibility for the fire. Their claim was verified by ATF and FBI investigators.

That Christmas morning was cold and dry, made even colder by a stiff wind from the north. ELF could not have had better conditions to start a fire. When I arrived about 25 minutes after receiving the call, the fire had been burning for over an hour. The roof had caved in and the firefighters were busy trying to put out several hot spots. Incendiary devices placed on opposite sides of the building by the arsonists, presumably for maximum effect, had ignited the arson fire. Our office was primarily wood construction with many interior walls lined with cedar. The office was built in 1978 and the construction was meant to display the wood products industry. The alcoves in the front and rear provided corners for maximum ignition heat and the vents above the ignition point allowed the fumes and flames to carry throughout the dry, wood framed attic. It was clear that ELF had sized up our facility and had known their standard fire setting practices would cause the office to burn easily, once ignited.

There were at least three alarms called during the fire, with many firefighters working several sides of the 7500 square foot structure. After a quick look, I called my boss to give him an update and then started to call all my staff. One by one, the staff--and in many cases their families--came in during the morning, interrupting their holiday festivities. We all stared in disbelief and wandered around as close as the firefighters dared to let us. The fire departments were concerned about our safety as we instinctively moved closer and closer, driven by the need to save what we could. Throughout the early morning we comforted each other and tried to comprehend what was happening. At the time, we did not know it was an arson fire. As we gazed at the smoldering rubble, we all wondered what we could have done to prevent it.

The fire department kept us from entering the perimeter, but I was able to engage a fireman on the periphery about how things were going and when they thought it would be contained and finally extinguished. As I was discussing the situation with the firefighter, I noticed one area containing all our easements, lease documents, real estate papers, rights-of-way files and other important files. It was not heavily damaged by the fire, but was getting a lot of water going in and around it. I asked the fireman if there was any way we could get a tarp over the file cabinets to protect them from water damage. We broke out the remaining glass of the window and crawled in to the office and draped a tarp over the cabinet. We were very fortunate that the fire originated well away from this area. With the exception of a little water in the file cabinets, these files were saved from fire or water damage. I wish we could have done the same for many others.

Several hot spots were particularly difficult to extinguish. The firefighters, many of them volunteers, had to separate the outside wall from the building to extinguish the fire. It was difficult and

dangerous work. They were trying to pull the wall down while preventing the firemen from getting trapped by the falling wall. They pulled an exterior wall down in at least two locations. After seeing all the dangers up close, I remember thinking that morning about all the hazards the firemen endured. We gained a renewed appreciation for the dedication and bravery of our firefighters on that chilly Christmas morning.

By late morning the fire was declared out. The fire marshal indicated he wanted us to stay away from an area he thought might have been the source of the fire, the copy machine room. With the caution to stay clear of this area, we were allowed to enter and retrieve what we could salvage. Because safety is one of our company's core values, we held a safety meeting before we embarked on the salvage project. One of the first things I brought out was a display case with a folded American flag from the office of Sergeant Major Rudy Frazzini, one of our foresters, who is also a Gulf War veteran and active in the Marine Reserves. This was the flag that had draped his father's coffin, and I knew how important this was to Rudy and the rest of us. I made sure it was safe in the seat of my pickup.

Many of the staff had to postpone their Christmas activities to spend the day salvaging all the items they could. It was especially tough on four of my grandchildren because we were due to open presents with them at 10:00 A.M. in the morning and they had to wait until I arrived that evening. The fire was on a Saturday and we were expecting rain by the following Monday. We knew we had to get everything under cover by then. We worked all day Saturday and came back on Sunday to move as much as we could to our mill site. Our goal was to salvage the files and what we could for our temporary quarters. I recall pulling out file drawers that were still smoldering and attempting to extinguish the embers so that we could salvage the files. We filled a large room (approximately 2000 square feet) in the nearby veneer mill with file drawers, computers in varying degrees of meltdown, and other office equipment that we thought we could salvage. There were many hazards associated with salvaging all the usable remains of a fire. We had to contend with broken glass, floors that gave way, and overhead ceilings that had caved in and were resting on file cabinets. We contended with the ever-present tangle of wires, debris and remnants of the ceiling and roof trusses. The conditions were difficult for salvaging, but we worked cautiously and had a good share of the salvageable material removed by Sunday evening.

On Monday our access to the office and its contents was cut off completely by investigators from the FBI and ATF, as well as the Oregon State Police. Not only could we not get close to the rubble, we could not even talk to any of the investigators. The Federal folks were quite focused and extremely professional in their investigation. The evidence gathered and the fine work by the Federal agencies eventually led to confirmation that ELF did, in fact, start the fire. As noted earlier, ELF, through their spokesman, Craig Rosebraugh, claimed responsibility for the fire, and their claim was independently confirmed by Federal investigators.

When you think about losing your home to fire, what is the first thing you wish you could save, assuming all the family members and pets are out? In my house, my first concern would be the irreplaceable art work, family heirlooms, and of course, all the photos and slides of family and friends. Our offices are very much like our homes. Many of us spend as much time in our office as we do our home. We have collectibles, art and other individual items that reflect ourselves. The very personal nature of our offices being destroyed by a cowardly arson attack has as much of an emotional impact as losing one's home. That may sound too strong, but the point is we all lost personal items that were important to our professional lives that make us balanced and productive

contributors to our society.

In my case, I lost a whole file drawer of photographs and slides taken over a 25-year career. These pictures were a great treasure to me and I was able to salvage little of that precious drawer. I clearly remember welling up with tears, looking at the fused mass of pictures and shriveled slides, thinking that this history of my work life, much like a daily journal, is gone. I had intended to use these pictures to write my professional history when I retired. I just do not think about it any more because I get depressed. In addition, I was very proud of my contributions to various boards and organizations. The certificates recognizing those contributions were hanging on my wall, as I am sure they do in many of your offices. They were all incinerated into a pile of ash and rubble. I did manage to salvage one thing I treasured and brought it with me today to the hearing on Ecoterrorism and Lawlessness in National Forests. I hold a copy of the proceedings on hearings of the sale of timber from Federal lands held in the spring of 1979. I was able to testify at a similar Congressional hearing and was given a copy of those proceedings. It is a little worse for wear, but that was one little treasure I did get to keep.

Other colleagues have similar stories, such as one who lost the only photo he has of his two very pregnant daughters posing tummy to tummy. Another person lost a one-of-a-kind map of the original railroad route that accessed the heart of our forest lands during the times when the only access was by railroad. One person lost the picture of his father dressed in his army uniform, and a diploma with the summa cum laude banner was damaged. Numerous family pictures and small mementos were lost. This was not just an attack on a corporate entity; it was an attack on all the individuals who called our office home for 40 to 60 hours a week. Our personal possessions were destroyed. Our lives were severely disrupted.

As far as the corporation was concerned, the attack did not alter our business strategy. We were up and running within a week, on the first operating day in January, with all new copies of contracts, an office, phones, and all the office equipment necessary to keep us in business. It did, however, change how we view security. We take our security much more seriously than we did before December 25, 1999. Our new office contains state-of-the-art security measures inside and out. We all have a heightened sense of awareness. We lost our sense of security and became more keenly aware of the risks we have on our lands, at our mills, and around our equipment. The timber industry is a proud and industrious segment of society. Even though the industry has been battered on many fronts, it is still relatively strong and viable with an incredible will to survive. A few terrorists will not stop our efforts to be good stewards of the land, or stop us from providing quality products the public demands. The domestic terrorists have only strengthened our resolve to remain a strong, viable part of the U.S. economy.

To replace the office, we went through months of analysis, negotiations, and internal discussions before we settled on a structure that was very much the same floor layout as before, but very different in building design. Since ELF attacked our facility, security has become a huge factor in how we site, secure and manage our facilities. Existing streets, access, cooperation of local government, and current zoning of adjacent properties all played into our decision to relocate in the same spot as before. In the end, we were not going to allow terrorists to dictate where we conduct business.

The company spent approximately \$1.5 million dollars replacing the office and contents. A significant portion of that cost was expended on internal and external security. Boise Cascade has

been a target once; we felt we could once again be in someone's cross hairs. As a result of the arson fire, the company chose to build using more materials such as concrete, steel, and aluminum, which are non-flammable and non-renewable energy consuming. Ironically, when the effects of the air pollution from the fire are added to the use of energy consuming non-renewable building products, the effects on the ecosystem are doubled. ELF impacted our lives, as well as our office building, and now we are more cautious. Life goes on and we are continuing to harvest, plant and nurture our forests for future generations. Our mills continue to make and distribute high quality forest products that we all use. After such an event, we look at life differently, but we must continue managing our forestlands. After all, they are not going anywhere.

We also manage our timber sales differently, as this 1999 arson was not our company's first experience with lawless behavior by radical activists. For example, our company has experienced these negative effects on our operation in southern Oregon in the early 1990s with the Sugarloaf timber sale on the Siskiyou National Forest. During logging operations we hired extra security and our operations were delayed. We even had protesters force one of our contractor's log trucks to come to a halt so an accomplice could lock himself underneath the truck. Trees were spiked with metal spikes. We have seen the results of lawless activities in the National Forests firsthand. From our perspective, purchasing timber from the National Forests has increased Boise Cascade's risk of being targeted by organizations like ELF.

In summary, ELF burned our office building. It was reported on December 31, 1999 by the *Oregonian* newspaper that Craig Rosebraugh received the ELF communiqué and that "he was pleased with the arson." ELF is a terrorist organization willing to break laws that we all live and work by. Boise Cascade lost little time getting back to the business of growing, harvesting, planting, and nurturing the forests in our charge. It did not change the company's desire to meet our customer's wood, paper and office products needs in the market place.

The terrorists did have an impact on how we view the world from a security perspective. And it also cost the company \$1.5 million. The primary impact of burning our office was on the personal lives of our staff. However, it also placed my staff, the firefighters, and me in harm's way, and it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously injured or killed. We have biologists who frequented that office at all hours of the night, coming or going on their rounds to survey for Spotted Owls and Marbled Murrelets. Any one of those workers could have been present, and injured or killed by ELF's terrorist activities.

Our personal and professional losses cannot be measured, so we are moving on. We only hope the cowards are caught and held accountable for the terror and destruction they have caused. Congress and others should recognize that these groups are terrorists and these group should be sought out and prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on such an important and timely topic.

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