

THE LIFE OF A TREE

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My talk on the life of a tree only got about half way done – so this year I'll talk about productivity and quality for our kiln drying. First of all is maintenance of our kilns. We have them set on a 10 day preventive maintenance (P.M.) schedule, which means that every 10 days we have a kiln down for preventative maintenance. We have eight kilns so that means every 80 days we do a P.M on each kiln. It takes about 8-10 hours to fix everything that is wrong. That doesn't mean if something goes wrong we don't shut it down and fix it, but it means that the kiln is gone over with a fine tooth comb for any possible problems.

About 10 years ago we went to an annual kiln meeting in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. and were introduced to a Vent-X-Changer. We bought two of them for one of our big kilns. We put it on line and found it to be everything they said it was, then some. It has been pretty well maintenance free with only a few problems. I would like to see them on all our kilns.

We all get in a comfort zone and when that zone is changed you get upset, nervous, but as time goes on you can see the change and what it is doing for the better.

My first example is drying eight-foot studs in our two 60-foot-long kilns. How many 8-foot studs can you get in a 60-foot kiln, 7 cars per track, which makes 56 feet. We were short 4 feet on each track. So Mike Sprague asked me why can't we dry studs in another kiln that is 64 feet long? I said we can, so we switched over to kiln #7. It is 64 feet long allowing us to put 8 cars per track. In our 60 foot kilns we are able to dry random length lumber. We can make the tracks come out to 60 feet. That will give us the capacity of drying another 2 million feet of lumber per year at no cost to Simpson. Then, as most of you who were at Simpson for the monthly WCDA meeting already know, we don't put any sticks in the bottom and top layer of lumber. The reason is that if a bunk or kiln cart is out of place it won't bow or bend our lumber. It stabilized it. This gives us better grade recovery and also allows us to dry another 4 million per year at no cost to Simpson.

We found the moisture content on the layers without stickers to be ½ to 2% higher. We can live with this. We are able to dry on the average of 30 million board feet per month with only 8 kilns.

We modified our kiln carts by placing another tube between the existing tubes so the space between supports for the lumber would only be 2 feet instead of 4 feet. The reason for this is when we dry random length lumber we can even end on side and odd in on the other side. This allows us to fill in the blank spots and restrict the air from going through the random length loads. The air velocity in our kilns ranges from 700-1250 depending on which kiln.