SLAB PICK-UP RACKS

An efficient system and equipment for handling sawmill slabs or other forest products is used in western Pennsylvania. The system consists of leaving portable racks at sawmills that are filled as slabs are produced. These racks, which are equipped with flanged wheels, are collected by trucks on a regular schedule depending upon the output of the mill.

Two or more ramps with tracks to accommodate the wheels of the racks are built at the sawmills. These ramps are located handy to the off bearer so that the usual long walk to the slab pile is eliminated.

When the route truck arrives it unloads an empty rack on a vacant ramp. The truck then backs up to the loaded ramp aligning the rails on the truck frame with those on the ramp. Special screw jacks under the rear of the truck frame are swung down to support the load as it comes on the truck. Binder chains are fastened to the upright stakes and pulled tight over the top of the load.

A power takeoff winch behind the cab and between the truck frame winds up a cable, thus drawing the rack to the truck (fig. 1). The truck then pulls out from the ramp to allow more working room, the jacks are swung up, and the chains hooked around them. Then the load is secured at the rear by two turn-buckle clamps (fig. 2). Locking the winch cable in place holds the front of the load during transit.

The entire unloading and loading operation requires from 5 to 18 minutes, depending upon difficulty in backing up to the ramps caused by snow, mud, and the like. Loads hauled averaged about 3 cords, weighing 10,000 to 11,000 pounds each. Two trucks handle the slabs from 11 small sawmills.

Weight of the empty rack, winch, track, and other accessories is about 700 pounds. This weight is nearly the same as that of a standard truck body, so that little, if any, hauling capacity is lost. The cost of the equipment and installation on the truck is about $250, and the cost of the racks is about $60 each.

Although the system described is used for slabs, it can be adapted for handling other forest products produced by small operators and farmers.

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Figure 1.—Loading a full rack.

Figure 2.—Details of jacks, track, and turn-buckle clamp.