

'Wood-be' thieves plague red cedar

Log lifting from state timber lands grows to million dollar racket

Timber theft rapidly is becoming a multi-million dollar crime wave in Oregon and log lifters are plaguing federal, state and private forest lands.

"Log lifting has been a problem for years," says Sam Frear, communications director of the Willamette National Forest, "but lately, it's become a real racket."

By JOHN MITCHELL
Of the Emerald

The prime target of timber thieves is old growth Western red cedar, which sells for \$150 to \$500 per cord. Some cedar trees are worth well over \$1,000, according to Frear.

Steve Woodard, Lane County extension forestry agent, says the stolen wood is bought by operators of shake and shingle mills scattered around the state. The consumers are home or cabin builders and remodelers.

"The problem is all the small mills cutting on a part-time basis," says Woodard. "They can't afford to bid on Forest Service timber sales, so they buy logs from anyone they can — no questions asked."

Some theft sites resemble professional logging operations. Tractors and self-loading trucks

are used to remove the logs and stumps are concealed under dirt and slash debris to discourage detection.

"These people are obviously experienced," says Frear. "Felling and yarding cedar is not an easy task — you have to know the business."

Apprehending timber thieves is tough work, according to Norris Joyce, chief investigator in state-owned forests. Many thefts are never investigated because they aren't reported, he said.

Timber theft investigations on federal land now represent 20 per cent of the work load of the 75 FBI agents assigned to Oregon. They check out thefts and destruction of property on lands administered by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, about half of all the land in the state.

But actual court convictions of timber thieves are rare.

Last year the FBI investigated 24 cases that resulted in four court convictions, according to Sean McWeeney, acting special agent in charge of the Portland FBI office. So far this year, there have been 51 cases and 11 convictions, he noted.

McWeeney estimated that log lifting from federal land in Oregon alone will exceed \$1 million this year.



Drawing by Steve Sandstrom

EWEB candidate

Pratt discusses energy policies

"Energy conservation must be a top priority for EWEB", Camilla Pratt, candidate for the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) from Wards 2 and 3, told the University Democrats Tuesday afternoon.

Pratt, who supports Ballot Measure No. 9, says nuclear energy has gone "too far, too fast" and the priorities for energy sources ought to be industrial co-generation and wind-hydro and solar generation.

Industrial co-generation uses wasted steam from industrial plants to drive electro turbines. EWEB is already using this process in cooperation with Weyerhaeuser Co.

There are basic problems with nuclear energy — such as plant safety and waste disposal — which must be solved before it goes any further, she said.

Pratt called the Springfield Utility Board's (SUB) \$36 million investment in two new nuclear plants in Washington "really tragic" but labeled EWEB's \$20,000 investment in wind generation research a sound investment which is "available and practical." She said it would double SUB subscribers rates when they start receiving power, which they won't until 1983.

Pratt had nothing but praise for EWEB's building efficiency standards by which it judges local building contractors, and gives Energy Building Efficiency Building Awards. She also supports federal legislation awarding up to \$250 in tax credits for homeowners who insulate already existing homes.

Pratt said she does not support fluoridation of the water supply. "I'm not convinced it really works, and it's not fair to force everyone to drink fluoridated water."

'Fuzzbuster' alarms cops

(ZNS) — Michigan State Police are up in arms over a new device called "The Fuzzbuster," which they say thwarts their attempts at effective highway patrolling.

The Fuzzbuster is an electronic gadget that can be plugged into a car's cigarette lighter, and which emits a warning tone the minute it detects a police radar trap. When the Fuzzbuster sounds its alarm, the driver knows that the car is being tracked on radar and immediately slows down.

Potential speeders across the

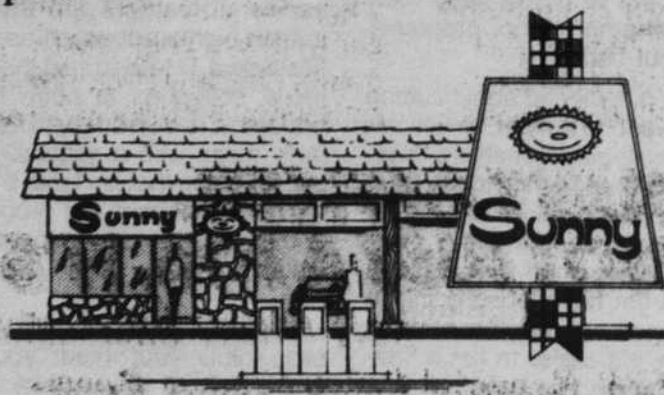
country have been buying up Fuzzbusters by the thousands at about \$100 per gadget. This is nothing compared to the millions of dollars in tickets which the gadgets have reportedly helped avoid.

But all good things must end, say the Michigan police, who have asked the state attorney general and the courts to decide if Fuzzbusters are legal. The police seem to think that the Fuzzbuster's sole purpose is to "circumvent the law."

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