

UTILIZATION OF SMALL DIAMETER PONDEROSA PINE IN THE TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRY

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Located in the White Mountains of Arizona, Imperial Laminators has the unique opportunity to interface with various organizations and government entities who's primary goals are to improve prevention of wildfires, reduce hazardous fuels and restore fire-prone ecosystems. Imperial Laminators initially opened its doors as most businesses do, with a market in place and the wherewithal to service that market. As time went by, we became more entrenched in the community and began to "hear" what the community needed, a use for small diameter trees that would expand the market and create a "value added" product in which small sawmills could participate in the harvesting, processing and sales of the raw materials. The utilization of Small-Diameter Ponderosa Pine (PP) in the Transportation Industry was born out of a family trip taken by the General Manager of Imperial Laminators. Mile after mile of 6x8 southern pine and 8x8 PP guardrail posts line the highway. The currently approved products, No. 1 visual-stress-grade for each case, are becoming more and more challenging to make on a consistent basis due to the size and age of trees being harvested. The decision was made to conduct tests of a PP glue-lam assembly to pass the NCHRP Report 350 Test 3-11 on W-Beam guardrail at Texas A&M University. Once successful, approval from The U.S. Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration in Washington, D.C. would be sought. Imperial Laminators is currently producing federally approved PP guardrail posts (patent pending) for the State of Arizona.

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