

SAWMILL FORUM

CASEY
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DOCTOR



I got a saw in from one of my customers and apparently the sawyer wrote on it “scrubs”. This is not one of those mills where I have the opportunity to talk directly with the sawyer. What do you think he means by “scrubs”?

Most likely the term “scrubs” is sawyer-talk for a situation where the saw runs out of the log and therefore rubs the log when the sawyer gigs back the carriage. Because the saw ran out of the log, it will try to stand back up straight when exiting the cut, but it can't because the log is in the way. If the saw had cut the right path, it would not be touching the log when the carriage reverses.

Chances are the saw now appears to be dished towards the board side. The saw was running out either because the saw is dished or the saw is dished because it was running out of the log enough that it conformed to that shape. In that case the bits are probably high on the board side which would pull the saw out of the cut and then upon exiting the cut the saw would snap back up straight (because if the mis-sharpened teeth are not in the cut, they can't pull the saw off line anymore). Once the saw is standing up straight it is rubbing or scrubbing the log.

Now that I have answered your question, let's talk about the larger picture a little bit. I have noticed that most of the more successful operations have better communication within the company and from the sawyer to their local saw doctor.

The best race car drivers are the ones who are also great at being able to communicate with their crew chief or engineer as to what the car feels like and how it is reacting to any changes that were made. Sure they have the technology to gather plenty of data on how the race car is reacting, but driver feedback is critical to the overall success of that team.

The same is true when it comes to the saw doctor or the millwright being able to get good feedback from the sawyer, especially after changes have been made. Yes there is plenty of data to gather by measuring the accuracy and quantity of the lumber being produced, but there is no substitute for good, honest, and accurate feedback.

The first challenge can be to get the sawyer to communicate with you. Sometimes the second challenge is to be able to interpret exactly what the sawyer is saying into something you can understand.

Of course some sawyers don't bother to communicate at all, but among those do, there are times when they have a language all their own

Here are some examples::

Sawyer says the saw lost its tension.

That means the saw is dished towards the board side and no longer makes accurate lumber.

Sawyer says the saw doesn't have enough tension.

That means that the saw actually has too much tension and feels sort of loose. The sawyer mistakenly thinks that the stiffer the saw is, the more tension it has.

Sawyer says the saw has too much tension.

Chances are that means that the saw now is so stiff it actually has almost no tension.

Disclaimer: There are a few sawyers out there who do actually know which saws have too much tension and which ones have too little tension. But the tricky part is knowing which ones.

Sawyer says the saw won't stand up.

That means that the saw won't saw accurate lumber and is most likely heating and running out of the log and dished towards the board side. That is a throwback to the old myth that the saw is supposed to be dished towards the log side and then when you bring it up to speed it will miraculously stand up straight due to centrifugal force. Of course those who read Sawmill Forum on a regular basis are aware that the saw should be standing up straight when at rest and then when up to speed it will still be standing straight.

Sawyer says the saw is marking.

That means that there is one or more bent shoulders causing the teeth to leave excessive marks in the lumber.



Sawyer says the saw chops.

That means that either there are some bent shoulders causing excessive marking of the lumber (see marking) or that there is a high tooth possibly a tooth that is pushed back a little which would cause it to be a touch high and is causing a chopping sound. Or one of the bits is working its way out of the saw.

Sawyer says all of a sudden the saw won't do anything.

That means that the sawyer made a set while in the cut and dished the saw horribly to the board side and now for some mysterious reason it doesn't seem to cut accurate lumber anymore.

Sawyer says saw needs hammered.

This is one of the toughest ones to interpret. It might mean that it is indeed time to get the saw rehammered. But it could easily mean that the mill is now having collar trouble because the sawyer stuck the saw and sheared the pins and didn't bother to tell anyone. Or it could be that the bits are being mis-sharpened and the saw runs off line on a regular basis. Or there is bearing heat travelling to the saw and changing the tension so that it doesn't run properly. Or the sawyer just hit some nails and knocked all of the log side corners off the teeth and now the saw dives out of the cut.

The possibilities are seemingly endless.

Although I like to poke a little fun at the communication abilities of the average sawyer, I really do advocate as much real communication as possible with the sawyer. He is the one running the saw day in day out and most of them know what's happening and can be quite good at giving realistic and useful feedback. And once you learn their language the rest is easy.

Questions about sawmills and their operation should be sent to Forum, The Northern Logger, P.O. Box 69, Old Forge, NY 13420, FAX #315-369-3736.

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