



## FOREST RESOURCES ASSOCIATION INC.

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## SAFETY ALERT

16-S-4

### “ECOLOGY BLOCK” WALL COLLAPSES

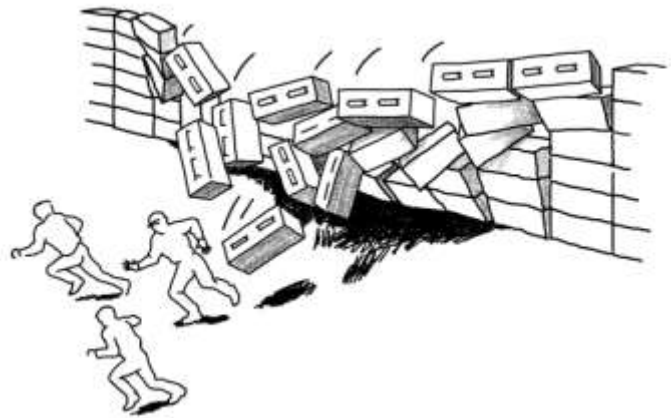
May 2016

**BACKGROUND:** Walls built from interlocking concrete blocks, often called “ecology blocks” are commonly used in agriculture, construction, and wood manufacturing industries. They are dry-stacked to create walls and outdoor storage bins for a wide variety of products. These walls can become unstable and pose a hazard to workers and customers.

**PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:** The employee/owner was in his early 70s and was overseeing the placement and construction of the ecology block wall.

**UNSAFE ACT OR CONDITION:** This ecology block wall was being built on an area of sandy soils on the property, and several employees were standing near the wall while blocks were being moved into place. On the second day of the project, the equipment operator finished moving a block into position, while two employees and the owner were standing near the wall to survey and discuss the project.

**ACCIDENT:** The wall became unstable and started to topple. All three individuals attempted to run away from the falling blocks, but two of the 3,000-pound concrete blocks fell on the owner, trapping his lower body.



**INJURY:** The owner sustained injuries to which he ultimately succumbed.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:

*Following the accident, noting a lack of existing safety programs addressing this risk, the company took immediate actions to implement the following:*

- A safety program was developed which consists of 3 levels of training. *Affected* denotes an awareness level for all employees; *Authorized* designates employees who will be building or involved in the construction or maintenance of the walls; and *Certified* identifies employees authorized to issue internal building permits and to perform inspections.
- Once this ecology block wall safety program was finalized, all employees were promptly trained.
- The company’s goal is to minimize the number of employees involved in the wall building process and to keep employees out of the hazard zone.
- An internal building permit process was implemented and issued through the safety department. The permit includes the job description, required Personal Protective Equipment, a hazard assessment, and a list of the “*Authorized*” employees allowed in the work area.
- All ecology block walls requiring an internal permit are inspected upon job completion to ensure they meet safety standards. In addition, two “*Certified*” employees are assigned to perform an inspection of all the ecology block walls at the plant twice a year.

*Reviewed by:*  
Vickie Hoffart  
Western Region Manager

*Please follow equipment manufacturers’ recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.*