

Local logging trucks bombed

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APTOS — Days before the resumption of logging that has Fern Flat Road residents deeply divided, three logging trucks parked there were damaged by explosive devices — said to be pipe bombs — at around 12:15 a.m. Saturday.

The triple blasts blew out the windows of the trucks, punctured floorboards and charred the cabs to the tune of \$50,000 worth of damages. The trucks were parked in an equipment shed along Fern Flat Road in the Aptos hills.

No one was injured. Sheriff's deputies are investigating but would not speculate about possible suspects and motives. No one has claimed responsibility for the bombing.

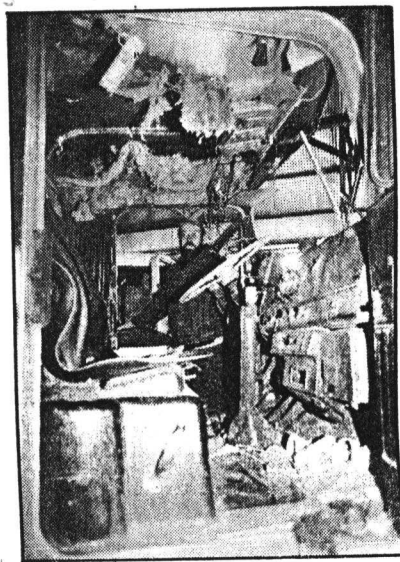
The first explosion occurred just after midnight, said John Evenson, a truck driver for General Lumber Co. of Carmel Valley, which owns the trucks.

Evenson, whose home overlooks the equipment shed, said a second blast followed about a minute later and then a third a few seconds after that.

"It was an awesome explosion," he said. "On the second one, I realized it was not a deer rifle."

General Lumber owner Andy Siino said Saturday he's still in shock.

"I've just been walking around today with my mouth open," Siino said, after police showed what he



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Driver John Evenson inspects damage to the cab of one of the bombed trucks.

said were remnants of pipe bombs. "Anyone's first reaction would be environmentalists. But I can't say that's the end of the story."

According to Evenson, the logging of about one million boardfeet of lumber in the area is set to start this week. State restrictions on logging during the rainy winter months to reduce damage from run-off and erosion end Monday.

Composti Timber Services,

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owned by Aptos logger Rod Composti, will cut the trees and General Lumber is set to do the hauling. Composti is at the center of a disputed home-building proposal on Santa Cruz's Westside.

Skirmishes between timber companies and logging opponents have flared throughout Santa Cruz County as higher timber prices increase the demand for logs.

The bombing marks a possible new level of conflict — if it turns out to be related to the logging issue.

"It's kind of hard to believe people would resort to this kind of violence," said Bud McCrary, whose Big Creek Lumber Co., the county's largest logging operation, has seen its share of logging protests. So far, sabotage has been limited to such things as gluing locks shut or people chaining themselves to trees.

What has many rural residents throughout the county upset is a once little-known provision in state logging rules. Timber harvests on

less than three acres are allowed to proceed without preparing the full-scale timber harvesting plans that could alert officials — and neighbors — to potential problems.

Fern Flat Road residents, among others, complain that the provision has allowed logging companies to descend like locusts on their once-peaceful forested homes.

Evenson traces the incident to the tense climate around logging in general.

"There is an anti-logging climate that makes overzealous eco-warriors break the law," Evenson said. "I hope it doesn't accelerate to the tragedies we've seen in the abortion issue."

Nonsense, said Jodi Frediani, head of the local Sierra Club's forestry task force. She was also dubious that neighbors could be responsible.

"The neighbors I know there would never do anything like that," said Frediani. "There's some pretty Wild West folks in that neighborhood, but the people I work with in terms of logging, and

people in Earth First! are not into doing that."

Earth First! and other environmental groups have changed, Frediani said, at least the ones she knows here in Santa Cruz.

"They don't do violent things," she said. "They don't spike trees. They don't believe in spiking trees. My feeling these days, even up in the Humboldt area, is that even the Earth First! people are not taking those tactics any more."

A local member of Earth First! said the bombing could have been intended to discredit his group.

"It would be the perfect way to disempower our group," said Dean Rimerman.

Despite the damage to the trucks — and regardless of who did it, or why it was done — Evenson said the logging will proceed as planned.

"I just want whoever did this to know that they didn't stop anything," Evenson said. "We just won't be able to use these trucks. We'll just get other trucks."