

Forestry deaths drop dramatically



The year 2009 recorded the fewest deaths in B.C. timber harvesting, including hauling, in the last quarter century — four direct fatalities, compared with at least 10 every other year.

Even though 2009's wood harvest of about 47 million cubic meters was lower than the normal 75-million-

meter average, no prior year had less than a single fatality per 10 million cubic meters.

One year's data can be misleading, more important is the trend over the last few years, compared with the 22 fatality-per-year-average for the decade prior to 2004.

The annual average of 11 fatalities from 2006 to 2009 was half that of the earlier 10 year period, while the average annual harvest rate is down only 16 per cent.

The key to the improvement trend is leadership in operations of all sizes no longer accepting the historic high fatality or serious injury figures and becoming determined to make a difference.

How to operate without injury is now a regular conversation at many companies. This may be happening due to the initiative of the operations' leaders or in combination with a system like SAFE Companies, but regular discussion of how to operate injury-free is leading to creative solutions to long-standing problems.

Thank you to everyone in operations, unions, government and WorkSafeBC who have provided the leadership to achieve the trend in fatality reduction that continued through 2009.

Four deaths are still too many. Together we can reach a year, and then more years, without any fatalities.

REYNOLD HERT,
COUNCIL CEO

Expect less paperwork

Work is on track for revisions to the SAFE Companies audit system, part of an across-the-board Council commitment to better customer service in all programs.

"All the development for improved audit processes should be done by the end of March, with the rollout scheduled by the end of June," according to SAFE Companies Director Steve Chaplin.

"You can expect less administration and paperwork, a smaller audit document and a tighter focus on what counts most to reduce serious injuries and fatalities."

"Still, you can't eliminate process completely," he added. "These are audits, and there is a need to measure safety management systems."

The 2010 SAFE Companies to-do list also includes:

- » Addressing the different circumstances of companies with two to five employees and those with five to 19 employees.
- » Reducing audit turnaround times for all operations.
- » Introducing audit documents that can be completed and filed online.

EMAIL AUDITS NOW — In mid-January, the Council announced an interim step to that third objective. Large companies can now make PDF files of audits and submit them by email. Details are at www.bcforestsafe.org/email_submission.

Certifications double

The Council saw the number of SAFE-certified forestry operations nearly double over the past year — from 1,299 at the beginning of 2009 to 2,481 this January.

The new total includes 238 large companies, 1,526 small companies and 717 individual owner operators.

"This demonstrates strong, continuing commitment by companies of all sizes during very tough economic times," said SAFE Companies Director Steve Chaplin.



Key Council players

The Board of Directors has named the following members to chair Council committees in 2010:

Audit and Finance Committee — Jim Hackett of the Interior Lumber Manufacturers' Association

Program Committee — John Betts of the Western Silvicultural Contractors' Association

Human Resources Committee — Dave Peterson of BC Timber Sales

Governance Committee — Anne Mauch of the Council of Forest Industries

Forest Products Manufacturing — Ron Corbeil of the United Steelworkers-IWA Council

NEW DIRECTOR — The BC Community Forest Association has appointed Jack McLeman its representative on the Council's Board, replacing Kevin Davie who completed his term. Jack is Port Alberni City Council's representative on the local community forest.



COMMITTEE CHAIRS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): JIM HACKETT, JOHN BETTS, DAVE PETERSON, ANNE MAUCH, RON CORBEIL; DIRECTOR JACK MCLEMAN

Safety news briefs

Faller fatalities — The deaths of three fallers in separate incidents in 2008 form the basis of a B.C. Coroners Service review panel report released in late January. It makes safety recommendations to the Council, WorkSafeBC and others and can be downloaded from www.bcforestsafe.org/Faller_death_review.

Safety alerts — The Council's alert-of-the-month series focuses now on winter working conditions generally and on black ice specifically. The first is at bcforestsafe.org/AOM_January_2010, the second at bcforestsafe.org/AOM_February_2010.

Training evolution

Input from companies, workers and unions is critical to ongoing development of Council programs, according to Director of Forest Worker Development Steve Mueller.

A prime example is last fall's Vancouver Island Safety Conference, organized jointly by the Council, licensees, the United Steelworkers (USW) and WorkSafeBC.

"The 250 participants talked best practices and future safety priorities," said Steve. "What they said also involves training, and we're paying close attention, drawing on reams and reams of workshop flip charts and handwritten notes."

He sees this and other ongoing industry feedback supporting a broad Council commitment to better customer service — helping to shape developments like these slated for 2010:

- » Updating general and faller supervisor training courses with more focus on communication skills and practical applications of human factors research which deals with why unsafe decisions are still made, even when safety is a priority.
- » Making hazard assessment and worksite planning training more user-friendly for supervisors, small employers and individual owner operators.
- » Promoting forest industry standards and training for incident investigation.
- » Improving coordination by WorkSafeBC and the Council on training and certification issues.
- » Looking at ways of expanding hands-on field training, one example being partnerships with industry or the USW on new faller training.

The report of last fall's conference is online at www.bcforestsafe.org/files/files/newsroom/publications/2009%20VISC%20Report.pdf.

Coming attractions

April 8-9 — Association of BC Forest Professionals' annual conference and Expofor trade show, Kelowna; details at www.abcfp.ca/

June 3-5 — Resources Expo (formerly Forest Expo), Prince George; details at www.bcreourcesexpo.com/

June 3-6 — BC Community Forest Association conference and annual general meeting, Westbank; details at www.bccfa.ca

