



# The Month in Review

# OCTOBER 2005



*Unsafe is Unacceptable*

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**IMPROVING COMMUNICATION:** Given the increasing number and diversity of our activities, we are taking steps to ensure that we are keeping our members and those who are following the work of the Council informed and engaged. This monthly review is one of several steps that are being taken. Other steps include:

- **Website:** Our website, at <http://www.bcforestsafe.org>, is current and full of information on all aspects of safety in the forests sector. We will be conducting a review of the site to ensure transparency and ease of use.
- **Email Subscriptions:** We now routinely send targeted information through emails to a growing list of subscribers in specific areas. These include “Rumblings” a bi-weekly e-letter on activities related to our Forestry TruckSafe Initiative, emails on safety alerts, fatalities and serious incidents, and we will soon start an email specifically for Fallers.

We know that everyone is busy and that we all get more than we could possibly absorb every day through many sources of information. The intention with this “Month in Review” is to provide an overview with links that can take you to more detailed information if you wish.

**FATALITIES AND SERIOUS INJURIES:** First things first. To the end of October, the Forest Sector had incurred **34 fatalities and 66 serious injuries**, distributed across the sector, but with major concentrations in mills, harvesting and transport. Of these, **3 fatalities and 6 serious injuries occurred in October**. The detail on the incidents can be viewed on our site at:

[http://www.bcforestsafe.org/fatality\\_injury.asp](http://www.bcforestsafe.org/fatality_injury.asp) .

There have been increases in every area underlining the importance of the work of the Council and the magnitude of the effort required by industry to turn this around.

**EVENTS:** We had a number of events in late September that I will include in this review.

**September 22<sup>nd</sup>, Release of the Western Fallers Report:** “A View from the Field” was released at a press conference in Vancouver. The report, funded and assisted by the Council has had a significant impact on raising the profile of the safety situation in the sector. The Report was produced by working manual tree fallers, but it has important messages

for the entire sector. At the same conference the Council released an update on the fatalities to date and the clear message that the current situation is not acceptable to industry, that we take responsibility for it and that we must do better. The Fallers’ report, the fatality report and related documents can be downloaded from our media centre at:

[http://www.bcforestsafe.org/media\\_center.asp](http://www.bcforestsafe.org/media_center.asp)

**On September 29<sup>th</sup> the Council met with Ministers Coleman (Forests) and de Jong (Labour)** at their request to consider what must be done to improve the situation. All members of the Council were represented at the meeting. The Ministers pledged the support and engagement of their ministries and agencies and challenged the Council to come forward with an aggressive strategy to improve safety. The Council’s Chair, Jim Shepherd, on behalf of the entire industry welcomed the Ministers’ interest and support and pledged that Industry would take the lead in making the changes required to move forward. The meeting was a direct result of the raised concern resulting from the

WFA Report and the publication of the Fatality and Serious Injury Report of the Council.

**October 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>, WorkSafe BC’s Board Symposium on Future Directions.** This two day event was well attended by the Council and Board members. A forestry focused sub-committee provided useful input to the Board on the issues facing the sector and some of the changes that are required.

**October 18<sup>th</sup>, Meeting with BCTS.** Keith Playfair and I, Keith Rush and Krista Bax attended a meeting of the regional directors of BCTS to discuss the importance of that organization becoming more involved in promoting safety in the sector.

**October 19<sup>th</sup>, Meeting with TLA Board.** Keith Playfair and I attended the Board meeting of the TLA. The intention was to engage the TLA members in the work of the Council and the follow-up from the meeting with the two Ministers.

**October 19<sup>th</sup>, Meeting with The Forest Practices Board.** Keith Playfair and I met with Bruce Fraser and staff to consider the role that the Board might play with respect to raising the profile and focus on safety related matters. This is an area that has been discussed by the FPB and they are expecting to take a more active role in this area in the future.

**October 25<sup>th</sup>, First face-to-face Meeting of the Qualified Companies Advisory Committee.** The Qualified Companies Initiative continues to move forward with its first meeting of its TAC.

**October 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> Forestry TruckSafe Summit II.** About 80 individuals met for the second Summit related to driver, vehicle and road safety in the forest sector. This was a follow-up to the first Summit in Prince George in June. It is expected that the work of the Summit will result in a draft Action Plan that will be ready for wider distribution in mid November

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**HIGHLIGHTS:** The last six weeks have both busy and significant for the Council. There is a lot going on, but that would not make this last period that different from previous months. It has been significant due to the amount of attention that has been focused on the safety situation in our industry and the work that industry is undertaking to rectify the situation. We have, I believe, entered a different and new phase.

We are, as expected, encountering a number of negative comments. Some are saying that, “They have seen this before and that the current attention and calls for action will suffer the same fate as in the past – lots of rhetoric, little improvement and the carnage continues.” They are wrong. Here’s why.

- First, Industry has not only acknowledged that there is a problem, but that it is our problem and that we, collectively, must take immediate,

concerted action to rectify the situation.

- Second, we now have the attention and engagement of the two key Ministers and their agencies to work with industry to turn this around.
- Third, we have a well thought through strategy to get us there. The blueprint set out by the BC Forest Safety Task Force is there to guide our collective actions in this area.
- Fourth, for the first time, the forest sector has a dedicated body that is focused only on improving safety for workers and worksites.
- Fifth, public scrutiny, through the media is now engaged. We can no longer treat this as an industry issue; it now belongs to all British Columbians.

The coming months and weeks will determine whether this window of opportunity that has been opened will be the beginning of a new era for safety in our sector.

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**COMING UP IN NOVEMBER:** Here are some activities to follow next month. The “**Cost of Unsafe**” document will be ready toward the end of the month. It will provide detailed information on the current costs, both social and financial of our current safety record, and the potential savings we could achieve with a dramatically improved record. The “**Forest TruckSafe Action Plan**” will be released, dealing with a series of recommendations and initiatives to improve the safety of drivers, vehicles and roads. Follow-up discussions with a number of exterior groups are continuing on a number of immediate measures that we should collectively be taking to improve safety in the sector.