

Forest Safety news

Communication for you

Welcome to the first issue of a new BC Forest Safety Council newsletter. It presents snapshots of our programs, what we offer forest workers and their employers, and how we work with industry organizations, government and others.

We already generate a lot of information, so why start Forest Safety News? First, we see the publication enhancing the Council's commitment to full and effective communica-

VOL 1 | ISSUE 1 | FALL 2006

tions. Putting major developments and our activities in a broad context, it will explain who we are, and offer a heads-up or two about what's new or coming for forestry safety.

Second, we hope this brief presentation encourages you to get more information from our website at www.bcforestsafesafe.org.

Finally, we want to foster two-way communications, and to move you to let us know what you think about what we're

SEE MEETING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES, PAGE 3

The promise of better safety standards

November 1st was the official launch of the SAFE Companies program – a uniform, sector-wide system of health and safety standards designed and operated by the BC Forest Safety Council.

Forestry operations of all kinds and sizes – from harvesting to silviculture and everything in between – can now earn SAFE certifications by implementing required safety programs, making safety an over-riding priority and passing annual Council audits based on rigorous but attainable standards.

One immediate benefit is eligibility for a minimum five-per-cent rebate on WorkSafeBC premiums; another is a competitive advantage in going after new business. Eventually, certification will be the minimum provincial standard.

Registering now for the program assures lower 2006 fees and provisional SAFE Company status during the six months

allowed to achieve initial certification.

"This is an investment that will pay dividends to workers and their families, to individual businesses and to the industry overall," said Council CEO Tanner Elton.

Elton stressed that the program's primary goal is safer and healthier worksites and workers. Secondary objectives of lower costs and higher productivity will

unfilled orders or missed deadlines.

In a capital-intensive industry like forestry, indirect costs are at least three times direct costs, so the harvesting sector's total financial cost of 2003-05 injuries and fatalities was at least \$432 million.

These costs and injuries aren't inevitable, according to the Council. In fact, 10 per cent of B.C. forest companies had no

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be natural by-products of an improving safety record.

The Cost of Unsafe, a new Council publication, reports that the timber harvesting sector paid \$108 million in WorkSafeBC compensation premiums for 2003-05. Added to this were heavier indirect costs like those involving replacement workers, damaged equipment,

serious injuries for the last decade. Matching the safety performance of the sector's top 25 per cent of companies would have reduced overall costs by more than half and sustained far fewer injuries and fatalities.

As a whole, industry's safety record means a

MORE COMPETITIVE INDUSTRY, PAGE 2



Welcoming public scrutiny, inquest recommendations

The late 2005 death of Vancouver Island faller Ted Gramlich prompted the first coroner's inquest into a forestry fatality in a quarter century, a process that ended this fall.

Dealing with this case and as well as the state of safety in the forest sector, it produced 23 recommendations – directed to the BC Forest Safety Council, WorkSafeBC, the Minister of Labour and Gramlich's employer, Timber West.

"This demonstrates the value of public scrutiny," said Council CEO Tanner Elton. "We welcome the recommendations made to us and will address all of them fully."

The first recommendation to the Council called for accelerated implementation of its SAFE Companies program.

"It basically says to industry, 'Step up and take responsibility for your safety performance.' We are

doing that," Elton noted, "with SAFE Companies now operational, and an expectation that the sector will be fully engaged by the end of 2007."

Work also continues on two other key recommendations directed specifically at the Council – finalizing a supervisor certification program, and making training standards public.

Gramlich died two hours after being struck by the tree he was falling; heavy fog prevented medical evacuation by helicopter.

"As far as I'm concerned, (the inquest) is a little late for my Ted, but let's hope that this will never, ever happen again to another good friend of his or anyone else," said Debbie Geddes, Gramlich's partner.

The inquest is another example of industry, government and the public focusing on our safety performance," said Elton. "Ensuring that all forest workers go home to their families every day is the common goal."



Among other measures, the inquest jury recommended:

- Making SAFE Companies certification mandatory for prime contractors supervising hand falling.
- More enforcement and education by WorkSafeBC, including strictly enforcing requirements for forestry licensee-landowners, prime contractors and sub-contractors.
- Clarifying the Workers' Compensation Act as it relates to owner-operators and timber tenure licensees, supervisors and prime contractors.

A more competitive industry

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

competitive disadvantage compared to other jurisdictions.

One example is Alberta. Forestry compensation premiums there are less than half of ours. This is because forest workers in supernatural B.C. suffer much higher injury rates than their counterparts in wild rose country. There is no reason this province can't match and outperform Alberta.

The Council's ultimate goal is to eliminate forestry fatalities and serious injuries in B.C. The SAFE Companies program was devised to achieve results like those by making a reality of the industry-wide certification proposed two years ago by the Forest Safety Task Force.

"Taking responsibility – that's what SAFE Companies is about," said Steve Mueller, acting program director.

"Our current unacceptable safety record is the industry's problem, and we are the ones who must solve it. Every company, large and small, must implement safety programs and systems that meet practical audit standards.

"This will require commitment, effort and investment at all levels and from every sector of our large and diverse industry. But once in place, SAFE Companies will transform our safety practices, making a much healthier, more competitive industry with benefits for everyone working in it."

Forest Safety Council grows to 14 organizations

The Forest Safety Council grew this fall with the addition of the Federation of B.C. Woodlot Associations (FBCWA), which unites 23 woodlot associations whose members include woodlot licensees and private landowners with a combined total of 1.25 million cubic metres of annual harvest.

Representing the Federation on the Council's Board of Directors is Shawn Flynn of Port Alberni. He chairs FBCWA's Safety Commit-

tee and is president of the South Island Woodlot Association.

FBCWA is the first addition to the Council since its late 2004 formation to implement a comprehensive safety strategy based on four pillars:

- Cultural change making safety an over-riding priority and a shared responsibility throughout the industry.
- A safety-conscious legal regime with laws, regulations and compliance programs encouraging and supporting safety.
- Developing a competent and confident workforce trained, certified and encouraged to work safely.
- Encouraging qualified companies where safety programs are encouraged and rewarded.

CURRENT COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

BC Timber Sales

Central Interior Logging Association

Coast Forest Products Association

Council of Forest Industries

Federation of BC Woodlot Associations

Interior Logging Association

Interior Lumber Manufacturers' Association

Ministry of Forests and Range of British Columbia

North West Loggers Association

Truck Loggers Association

United Steelworkers-IWA Council

Western Fallers' Association

Western Silvicultural Contractors' Association

WorkSafeBC

Meeting our responsibilities

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

doing. This will help us meet our responsibilities to Council members and to the workers and employers, families and communities who depend on the forest industry.



Forest Safety News is about improving understanding of

the crucial idea that unsafe is unacceptable across our industry.

I hope you agree the newsletter reaches its goals.

Tanner Elton, CEO

Spotlight on Safety

Like a speeding bullet – When mechanical processor chains break, fragments flying at rifle-bullet speed are serious hazards. A study by the Forest Research Institute of Sweden analyses causes and makes prevention recommendations. It's online at: www.Skogforsk.se/templates/sf_product_3776.aspx?Sm=2&cri=3786&lipm=1.

Near-death rollover – An online two-minute slide show presents the true story of an excavator operator seriously injured building a logging road. See what went wrong and how it was preventable at: www2.WorkSafeBC.com/media/fss/rollover/slideshow.htm.

Alerts for you, from you – The Forest Safety Council is an online clearinghouse for information on current sector hazards – safety alerts from individual companies, agencies like WorkSafeBC and other firsthand sources.

Check the latest, or submit your own, at www.BCForestSafe.org.



Road-safety initiatives target '100 days of hell'

The winter hauling season is in full swing, and Forestry TruckSafe Director Mary-Anne Arcand predicted this fall that the months-long rush will prove the value of two Council road-safety initiatives.

Drivers and others can report hazards ranging from poor road conditions to unsafely driven vehicles on the toll-free TruckSafe Hotline (1-877-324-1212).

Arcand said "cooperation from licensees, agencies and others is phenomenal."

Since its launch last February, the program has handled more than 300 calls, with issues settled in most cases.

Sketchy reports meant many problems weren't resolved, but the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) Program is beginning to deal with that. Started in 2005, it involves owners putting unique number plates on their vehicles. Arcand said this helps "in getting a grip on unsafe driving and in highlighting the good guys."

Nearly 10,000 vehicles now carry VIN plates.

Supporting both of those activities, the Council is broadcasting a five-month campaign of 30-second road safety commercials. It runs through March on 40 radio stations in B.C. areas with heavy forestry and other resource industry traffic. Arcand said public awareness is crucial because private motorists are at fault in 84 per cent of collisions with logging trucks.

Training programs shift into high gear

British Columbia's new-faller training program began in late summer and is moving into high gear, according to Bill Bolton, the Council's Senior Advisor for Workforce Development.

By the end of November, 28 students will have completed the Council program's five days of classroom instruction and 25 days' field training. This is followed by up to 180 days' supervised work experience before testing for the faller certification that is now mandatory to work in the province.

Malaspina University-College starts the next intake in February at mid-Vancouver Island locations,

and other B.C. training facilities will also have faller training up and running by then.

Meanwhile, the Council is working on train-the-trainer sessions to prepare instructors for two forestry supervisor training courses scheduled to start across the province in 2007. One of the supervisory courses, a general three-day class suitable for any forestry activity, is the foundation for another two-day program focusing on faller supervision.

Find out more about both programs by phoning 1-877-741-1060 or emailing training@bcforestsafesafe.org.

Forest Safety News

is published quarterly by the BC Forest Safety Council to inform members and others about workplace health-and-safety developments affecting our province's forest industry.



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