

Forest Safety news

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New perspectives on safety



Suddenly, the Council has a growing group of alumni – many remaining active in forestry, all committed to making the sector safer.

Keith Playfair steps down as co-chair, but remains engaged through CILA.

Other regulars, also active with us since the beginning, are moving on. Jim Girvan has left TLA, and Roy Nagel is retiring from

CILA. Both made major contributions to the Council and promoted safety in their organizations. An invaluable member of our Policy and Programs Committee, Ken Mathews is retiring from BC Timber Sales, where he played a major safety role.

Meanwhile, new faces bring us fresh ideas and perspectives. Forestry veteran Ron Gorman is

SEE CHANGES ENRICH SAFETY EFFORTS, PAGE 2

Lack of workers, training threaten safety

Too few forest workers and training opportunities threaten severe compromises in safety because “recruitment and retention are safety issues.”

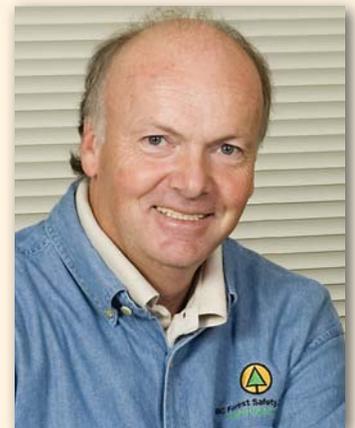
That sector-wide diagnosis came in a late January report and recommendations by Roger Harris, the ombudsman appointed by the BC Forest Safety Council.

Harris warned of worsening forestry labour shortages – a related problem being that training is almost non-existent and certification in place only for a few occupations.

“Likely for the first time in British Columbia’s history, jobs outside of the woods are equally or more attractive than jobs in the forest industry,” he said.

“We need to create an environment that attracts people.”

Better training is also imperative, according to the ombudsman. The small operations now employing most forest B.C. workers don’t have the training resources of large firms, and “we need advanced training



ROGER HARRIS, FOREST SAFETY OMBUDSMAN

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470 growing with SAFE Companies

The BC Forest Safety Council’s effort to foster a province-wide culture of forestry safety is on the grow, according to SAFE Companies Program Director Krista Bax.

Starting from zero last November, the program in its first four months had registered 470 operations in the process to earn SAFE certification.

SEE SAFE COMPANIES, PAGE 3

Better tree planter safety, with a few cautionary notes

With B.C. tree planting injury rates improving in recent years, a new study identifies likely factors in that positive performance and raises some cautionary notes for the future.

“We found that supervisors

play a critical role in maintaining safety, that awareness breeds a productive safety culture and that good safety practices can be as important as wages in attracting and retaining workers,” said John Betts. He is Executive Director of

the Western Silvicultural Contractors’ Association and represents it on the board of the BC Forest Safety Council.

The study also documents how the tight provincial labour market has led to more difficulty retaining experienced employees and a growing reliance

SEE TREE PLANTER SAFETY, PAGE 2



Issues must be addressed if BC forestry is to thrive

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on the sophisticated and complex equipment that dominates harvesting.”

These issues must be addressed, he said, “if the forest industry is to thrive and continue to provide revenue to fuel the provincial economy.”

The Council’s Policy and Programs Committee is reviewing Harris’ conclusions this spring. They distil months of meetings he had across the province during 2006 with individual employers and workers, labour and industry organizations, training providers and government representatives.

Here are summaries of his key recommendations.

- The provincial government should incorporate faller training into the advanced education system, giving it support comparable to that of trades certification and pre-apprenticeship programs.

- The Council should develop multi-level certification of logging truck drivers beyond basic Class 1 requirements for commercial drivers.
- The Council should take the lead in joint development of a training system for non-certified forestry occupations.
- The Council should work with sector stakeholders to deal with the issue of stress in forestry workplaces.
- The B.C. Auditor General’s forest safety review should consider how WorkSafeBC might improve rehabilitation and retraining of injured forestry workers. (The review was announced last December and is expected to be completed in June.)

For the full text of Harris’ report, click on “Forest Safety Ombudsman” at www.bcforestsafe.org; then select “Not Out of the Woods.”

Changes enrich safety efforts

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our new co-chair. Shaun Flynn, representing the Federation of Woodlot Associations, gives small landowners and operators a strong voice at the Council. Dave Lewis from TLA brings us a wealth of industry and community experience. Tom Jackson is new from BC Timber Sales and works for safety there.

Tree planter safety

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on younger, less-seasoned workers.

Betts also noted an apparently paradoxical finding – a declining tolerance for risk among younger workers, a group generally more injury-prone because of youth-related factors. He speculates this may be because of “supervisors doing a good job with training and setting good examples” and “companies creating awareness of and demonstrating genuine commitment to safety.”

Released this February, the study surveyed 833 workers across the province last year and compared their responses to similar 2004 research. Titled Health and Safety in the Tree Planting Industry, the 60-page study is at www.wsca.ca.

Here are other key findings.

- Despite positive shifts

(table below), workers’ reactions to some unsafe conditions remained unchanged from 2004 to 2006. In both years, only about half would stop work because of a toxic hazard; only about 43 per cent would report a supervisor for speeding.

- More tree planters and supervisors are younger, their 2006 average industry experience about a year shorter than in 2004. First-time planters accounted for 29.5 per cent of the total last year, nearly double the 2004 proportion.
- Last year, 20.8 per cent of workers saw silviculture as a career, compared to 25.5 per cent in 2004. This is critical, as veteran planters are twice as productive as newcomers and often do other work like brushing and spacing.

TREE PLANTERS SURVEYED ON SAFETY	2004	2006
ADMITTED THEY WERE LIKELY TO BEHAVE UNSAFELY	17.4%	9.9%
EXPECTED SUPERVISORS TO CORRECT UNSAFE BEHAVIOUR	22.0%	37.2%
ACTUALLY HAD SUPERVISORS CHECK FOR SAFE BEHAVIOUR	48.7%	74.7%
ACTUALLY HAD SUPERVISORS CORRECT UNSAFE BEHAVIOUR	33.3%	41.7%

FROM HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE TREE PLANTING INDUSTRY; STORY ABOVE

Changes like these enrich forestry’s safety infrastructure. All our alumni continue to advocate for safety, and they inform the institutional memory of our young organization.

To each, we owe a debt of gratitude for his service and efforts to make “Unsafe is Unacceptable” a reality.



TANNER ELTON, CEO

Forestry veterans in Council changing of the guard

The Council's founding co-chair, Keith Playfair of Fort St. James, completes a two-year term this spring and will be succeeded by Ron Gorman of Westbank.

A principal of the KDL Group, Playfair brought the Council "extensive experience and hands-on understanding of the sector," said CEO Tanner Elton. "Keith has an open mind and real conviction and dedication to the proposition that the industry must dramatically improve its safety record."

A member of the 2003

Forest Safety Task Force, Playfair headed the Council's Policy and Programs Committee and chaired the Forestry TruckSafe Summit.

"We're well on our way to concrete, positive changes in the way forestry does business in this province," said Playfair. "SAFE Companies will make a big difference, as will training."

"Fresh blood and new ideas are important; and Ron Gorman is exactly what's needed."

The Council's new co-chair is CEO of Gorman Bros. Lumber Ltd., a 56-year-old family company whose third



CHANGING OF THE GUARD BY KEITH PLAYFAIR (LEFT) AND RON GORMAN

generation works in the family business.

Gorman's interests are training and compliance, and he sees busy times ahead for the Council. A "huge wave" of companies becoming SAFE-certified "will uncover more weaknesses in the sector, and

we'll find more that needs to be done," he said.

The Council appeals to Gorman because it parallels his experience in the Revelstoke area, where community and forestry interests "recognized their responsibilities" and collaborated to improve safety.

SAFE Companies on the grow

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Two dozen companies had successfully completed Council audits to demonstrate that their safety programs meet and exceed industry safety standards – earning SAFE certification and eligibility for rebates on annual WorkSafeBC premiums.

Roughly 30 per cent of registered companies have 20 or more peak-season workers; 55 per cent employ three to 19 such workers, and 15 per cent are one- and two-person independents.

Bax also noted two training news items:

- Small Employer OHS Training dates are

being scheduled continuously at various locations across B.C. This addresses the certification requirement that at least one employee successfully complete a two-day Council course for companies with 3 to 19 employees.

- The Council is offering External Auditor training for safety professionals preparing to conduct SAFE Companies audits for large companies.

For information on both offerings, go to www.bcforestsafes.org, and click on "SAFE Companies" at the top of the home page.

Assuring "the best safety benchmarking"

The BC Forest Safety Council has acquired FIAS Injury Statistics Reports, a privately-held information service producing "the best and most detailed safety benchmarking available" for the B.C. sector, said CEO Tanner Elton.

"With our SAFE Companies program, this gives companies useful information to track themselves against overall sector performance."

Elton said that a steering committee will evaluate the service and report later this year on how best to integrate it with the Council's operations.

Started by the Interior Lumber Manufacturers Association, the service was maintained by the Council of Forest Industries until 1993, when the FIAS company took it over.

Supervisor training covers due diligence issue

Two new BC Forest Safety Council training programs recognize the legal requirement for supervisors to know their responsibilities and make workers aware of health and safety hazards.

One is a three-day basic class covering supervisory skills for any forestry activity, the other a two-day course on supervising certified fallers. They can be taken separately or in five consecutive days, although the basic class is

a prerequisite for the other, according to Bill Bolton, the Council's senior advisor for forest worker development.

"Offerings like these are crucial to a proactive culture of safety," he said. "The basic program covers what's needed to make sure forest workers return home safely every day, and everyone from owners to workers to family members is welcome to participate."

Basic course subjects include: supervisor, em-

ployer, prime contractor and worker responsibilities; implementing a safety program; due diligence; communication and safety meetings; hazard identification and control; supervisor inspections; emergencies; investigating and reporting incidents.

Faller supervision topics include: evaluation under the BC Faller Training Standard; safety requirements specific to fallers; identifying good and poor

falling practices; communicating effectively with fallers; address workmanship concerns about certified fallers.

Fees are \$585 for basic supervision and \$390 for faller supervision, including course materials and GST.

For more information on course dates and locations, contact the Council's office in Nanaimo at 1-877-741-1060 or email training@bcforestsafe.org.

What WorkSafeBC wants

How WorkSafeBC field officers check compliance with safety requirements shouldn't be a surprise, as their approach to site inspections is outlined in a new two-booklet publication.

Called *Forestry Compliance Officer Field Guide*, it's available now as a reference on the safety responsibilities of owners, employers, prime contractors, supervisors and workers.

For free electronic versions from www.worksafebc.com, type the publication name into the search engine at the upper right, and use the two links on the next page to download PDF files of Booklets 1 and 2.

Hard copies can be ordered for \$20 from www.worksafebcstore.com; the product code is BK107.

Spotlight on Safety

Early trouble sign? – With three forestry fatalities in as many weeks, the B.C. Coroner's Service issued a late January bulletin emphasizing that equipment should be immobilized before maintenance or repairs. One early 2007 death involved a skidder operator run over by his machine. For more, go to "Safety Information" at www.bcforestsafe.org, and click on "Safety Bulletins".

Eventful ideas – May 6-12 is North American Occupational Health and Safety Week, and ideas for activities

and event materials like posters are at www.worksafebc.com. Scroll down to "NAOSHWeek" under "Announcements".

Sow safety – Silviculture employers and supervisors can find information on planting techniques, workers' fitness, and related issues in Preventing Tree Planting Injuries. The 20-page booklet is at www.worksafebc.com/publications. Click on "by title or keyword" under "Publications Index"; select the letter "T"; then scroll down to "tree planting injuries".

Forest Safety News

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