

# Forest Safety news

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## A legacy for Ted Gramlich



As Council staff re-viewed injury and fatality reports in late November, we noted that it was

two years to the day since veteran faller Ted “Turbo” Gramlich had died.

His death was one of 43 forestry fatalities in 2005, seven of them fallers. It drew much public atten-

tion, and prompted the first coroner’s Inquest into a forest worker’s death in recent memory.

Since then, more has been said and done about forestry safety than in the

previous decade.

Safety is now front and center. Hundreds of companies have become SAFE-certified, and large and small efforts through-

SEE SAFETY PUSH PAYS OFF, PAGE 3

## New stage for faller certification in 2008

Faller certification in B.C. begins a new stage in 2008 with implementation of a long-expected annual renewal fee system that had been noted in information given to all fallers when they were first certified.

“Before certificates expire, fallers will receive renewal packages with an invoice, and then new faller cards will be sent after they pay their fees,” said Steve Mueller, the Council’s director of forest worker development.

The fee structure calls for:

- \$150 annual fee to renew faller certifications expiring in 2008
- A reduction to \$100 for

individual fallers whose operations are registered under the SAFE Companies program.

Mueller explained that certification is a requirement to work as a faller in BC as set by WorkSafeBC regulations, and licencees and employers are responsible for ensuring that certifications are current.

“The approach to faller certification is similar to that for drivers’ licenses, which requires renewal fees while qualifying individuals for certain driving situations,” said Mueller.

“Now we’re preparing to assess fallers’ skills and knowledge on an ongoing



basis and to allow them to raise their certification levels through a re-evaluation process.”

That’s the next step in the evolution of faller certi-

fication – re-evaluating individual certified fallers every three years to assure their work practices meet the existing BC Faller

SEE PILOT STARTS SOON, PAGE 2

## Calling all fallers

WorkSafeBC makes certification mandatory to work as a faller in this province, and many fallers face the

possibility of lapsed certifications because the Council can’t find them.

Ten per cent of certifica-

tion renewal mailings are returned by Canada Post because they can’t be delivered to fallers who move and don’t leave forwarding addresses or notify the Council of

their new addresses. Fallers can notify the Council of their current mailing addresses by phoning 1-877-741-1060 or emailing [training@bcforestsafes.org](mailto:training@bcforestsafes.org).

## Policy gaps and safety

A report by the B.C. Auditor General on forest worker safety was to be released in December, as this went to press.

The Council had input to the review process and expects all the recommendations to be directed at government agencies. After its publication, the report can be obtained online by clicking "Reports" at

[www.bcauditor.com](http://www.bcauditor.com).

Forests Minister Rich Coleman announced the review last December, saying the government wanted to know if any regulatory or policy gaps affect worker safety.

The review began in January, and the initial target of completing the report last summer was later extended.

## Pilot starts soon

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Training Standard. Fallers with the appropriate skills will also be able to increase their certification levels, which specify the slope and tree diameter that individual fallers have had their evaluation conducted at.

"We'll start testing a pilot re-evaluation system soon and expect it will be fully operational in 2009," said Mueller.

The pilot would see certified fallers re-evaluated, not by the Council but by Council-trained faller supervisors or bull-buckers working on the site. Most qualified supervisor trainers will also be certified and available to conduct these re-evaluations on a fee for service basis. The costs of implementing the re-evaluation program and conducting

quality assurance will be covered by the renewal fees that begin in 2008.

"The point is to make everyone as safe as possible," said Mueller. "For nearly two years, we've had no fallers die on the job, and certification has certainly contributed to that accomplishment."

B.C. has 3,618 certified fallers, including 3,197 grandfathered in an evaluation process that ended in July 2006.

Fallers can find out about their renewals by phoning 1-877-741-1060 or emailing [training@bcforestsafe.org](mailto:training@bcforestsafe.org). More general information is on the Council website at [www.bcforestsafe.org](http://www.bcforestsafe.org).

## Protecting forestry's safety gains



OMBUDSMAN ROGER HARRIS

By Roger Harris

While 73 Canadians made the ultimate sacrifice for their country in Afghanistan since 2002, about a hundred B.C. forest workers died here at home. It almost seemed that our working woods were also a war zone.

Over the last few years, however, the industry has made significant gains and started to put in place the systemic changes required to reverse what had been an unacceptable record.

The tools for that have been Council initiatives — SAFE Companies, Forestry TruckSafe and others — used by the industry to make fundamental changes to a culture which for decades had considered serious injuries and fatalities inevitable costs of business.

As a result, a consistent focus on safety is becoming the way to do business.

As I write this, we have gone 18 months without a faller fatality, something previously unheard of in B.C. In 2006, dramatic reductions in serious injuries and fatalities cut timber harvesting compensation costs by 39 per cent, and the number of claims

dropped by 21 per cent from the previous year.

The sector as a whole should be proud of the dramatic improvements in safety during 2006. The recent record suggests a real turn-around. But we must be conscious that B.C. forestry still has a long way to go on the safety front.

Today, the sector faces some of its toughest economic challenges and will need all of its innovation and resourcefulness to remain globally competitive. As we confront all of this, we must not lose sight of safety as a key element in the process.

Making sure forest workers, contractors and employers return home safely every night must continue to be the top priority.

My office was established to be the backstop, to see that safety gains are never lost. As we move into a new year, that is exactly what we intend to do.

*Roger Harris is B.C.'s forest safety ombudsman, an independent position created by the Council in 2006 to investigate safety issues and recommend how best to address them.*

## Key to small employer certification audits

Hundreds of small forestry employers across B.C. have a new resource to help them prepare their SAFE Companies certification (SEBASE) audits which measure how well their safety programs perform in the field.

The Council's web site now offers a resource designed specifically for small employers. Called *An Explanation of the*

*SEBASE Audit Questions*, it's a detailed guide for each of the 33 key questions making up the audit tool for small companies.

"This will help clarify the requirements for each of the questions in the SEBASE audit," according to Senior SAFE Companies Advisor Keith Rush.

The guide — as well as the complete audit tool and

hints on formatting small company audit submissions — can be found by clicking on "SAFE Companies" at [www.bcforestsafe.org](http://www.bcforestsafe.org).

"Going through the step-by-step guide will save time and take you a long way toward a successful audit submission," said Rush.

He emphasized that the new resource is meant to "complement free advice from Council safety advo-

cates. Small employers are definitely still welcome to apply for advocates' support, though it may take two to three weeks for site visits to occur."

Safety Advocate Cary White developed the new resource, drawing on his recent experience reviewing SAFE Companies audits and his extensive background as a WorkSafeBC field officer specializing in forestry.

## TWO HIGHS, TWO LOWS

Here are small companies' average scores on four of the SEBASE audit questions. A new Council resource (story above) spells out exactly how to deal with these and other audit questions.

### High Averages

Does the company have a written health and safety policy? [Question A1]	99%
Are company supervisors ensuring that the workers are using the controls that are in place? [Question B4]	99%

### Low Averages

Is the company ensuring that workers are competent to perform their tasks before they permit that individual to perform the task? [Question D4]	49%
Are there emergency response procedures (ERP) for injuries, fires, natural disasters and fatalities? [Question C4]	39%

## Growing Strong

The SAFE Companies program continues to grow.

By November 30, registration in the Council program totalled 2,615 companies: 1,354 small companies, 1,002 independent companies and 259 large companies. SAFE certification had been earned by 265 — 142 small companies and 123 large ones.

## Safety push pays off

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out industry are focusing on this critical issue.

In the past two years, we have also seen more than 3,600 fallers become certified. And next year starts a new phase with the review and renewal of certifications.

All that represents a

dramatic shift, one that pays clear dividends including far fewer incidents.

In fact, no B.C. faller has died on the job in nearly two years, and this may be the most important legacy of Ted and others who have lost their lives in the working woods.

The industry is learning from experience, no longer accepts injuries and fatalities as inevitable and stands committed as never before to the safety of workers.



TANNER ELTON, CEO

## Injury trends

This summarizes a report on 2007 serious injuries and fatalities prepared for a late November meeting of the Council's Policy and Planning Committee.

At mid-November, the timber harvesting sector had recorded 30 serious injuries and 14 fatalities (preliminary WorkSafeBC data that may be adjusted.) This represents an increase from 29 serious injuries and 10 fatalities at the same time in 2006.

Current trends include:

- Two skidder operators died in rollovers on steep slopes.
- Log hauling leads the sector in serious injuries with 13 to date.

## Safety Spotlight: Dangerous trend?

**Skidder rollovers** – The Council and other safety agencies are keeping close watch on what may be the beginning of a dangerous trend. It involves more skidder incidents, including skidder operators killed on steep slopes.

Two skidder rollover fatalities occurred in the first 10 months of 2007 (story at left), compared to none at all the previous year. Each operator died on slopes steeper than his equipment's limitations.

For Council tips on skidder safety, go to [www.bcforestsafe.org/nav-alerts.htm#bulletins](http://www.bcforestsafe.org/nav-alerts.htm#bulletins)

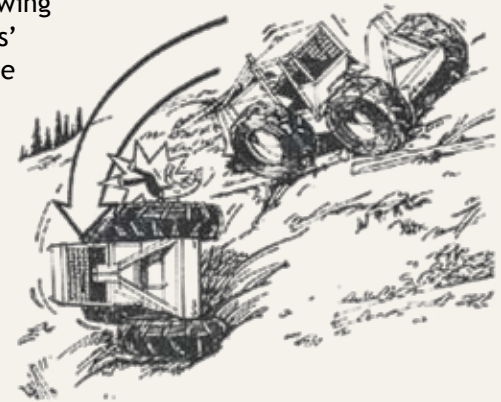
and scroll down to "Equipment".

More specifics on steep slope rollovers are in an article prepared by WorkSafeBC Forestry Specialist Dave Lachance for the winter issue of *Interior Trucker & Logger*. He describes how this kind of incident can be prevented, even without knowing skidder manufacturers' specifications for slope stability maximums. To be published in late January, the article will be at [www.interiorlogging.org/magazine.php](http://www.interiorlogging.org/magazine.php).

**More on safety for you** – WorkSafeBC offers extensive

information on accident investigations for all industries at: [www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/AccidentInvestigations/Home.asp](http://www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/AccidentInvestigations/Home.asp).

The new web site features an archive of reports and penalties, lists of recent accidents and background on the investigation process.



### Forest Safety News

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## Industry conferences to open 2008

**Truck Loggers Association:** The Council is a major sponsor of the latest edition of this landmark conference and expo, January 15-18 in Vancouver.

Key sessions focus on attracting investment to

create manufacturing value, coastal community values, non-traditional and emerging forest values, the value of the independent and a keynote speech by Premier Gordon Campbell. Details on the Council website at [www.bcforestsafe.org](http://www.bcforestsafe.org).

**6th Annual BC Natural Resource Forum:** Council Forestry TruckSafe Director MaryAnne Arcand is a speaker at this major event, January 17-18 in Prince George. Details at <http://www.eventscreators.com/businessstechshow/nrc/nrcconference.html>.

## Internal auditor training

The BC Forest Safety Council continues to offer a three-day internal auditor course to prepare employees of large companies to con-

duct annual maintenance audits to keep their SAFE Companies certification current.

For details about this course, and information

on other offerings to help SAFE Companies registrants of all sizes, go to [www.bcforestsafe.org](http://www.bcforestsafe.org) and click on "Training Calendar"; or phone 1-877-741-1060.