

What are my safety responsibilities on the woodlot?

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First, nobody wants to get hurt or have friends or family hurt working at the woodlot. A good understanding of your responsibilities under the Workers Compensation Act (WCA) and Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR) will help prevent these injuries. This article will give you the facts so you can be productive, safe and meet your legal requirements.

Under the WCA and OHSR, woodlot licensees are identified as “owners” and there are several responsibilities that all owners share:

- Plan the work appropriately to keep everyone on the woodlot safe.
- Maintain the woodlot and its infrastructure in good condition.
- Share information about hazards with anyone working on your woodlot. Control those hazards to create a safe working environment.
- Understand and implement the prime contractor requirements if there is more than one employer working on your woodlot.

Plan the Work

Planning on a logging or tree planting project this year? In all the hustle and bustle of hiring contractors and securing prices, don't forget to plan for safety. Safety doesn't just happen; it requires forethought and good communication skills. A pre-work checklist, like the one found in the BC Forest Safety Council Woodlot Safety Program, will help you with both.

Reference: OHSR 26.2 - Planning and conducting a forestry operation

Maintenance

Road maintenance should come to mind. Are your roads brushed out with good sight lines, culverts and bridges in good shape and all your signs in place?

Maintenance, however, means more than just roads. Consider where danger trees need to be assessed and possibly

removed. Do you have unburnt piles or other fire hazards building up?

Reference: WCA 119 - General duties of owner

Manage the Hazards

You know your woodlot inside and out, including what hazards exist there. Make sure you share that local knowledge with everyone you bring onto the site. For example, talk about last winter's heavy snowfall that created lots of broken tops or the radio dead spot where emergency communication will be difficult. Make sure to write down in your journal that this communication occurred.

Reference: WCA 119 - General duties of owner

Prime Contractor Requirements

If you hire contractors to do work on your woodlot, you need to be aware of the prime contractor responsibilities. These responsibilities apply when there is more than one employer (contractor) on a worksite at the same time. When this happens someone must coordinate their activities to make sure the operation runs smoothly and safely. This person is called the prime contractor. The prime contractor responsibility can be assigned to one of the contractors on site through a written agreement. If there is no written agreement, the default prime contractor is you – the owner!

The prime contractor must have three things to be effective:

- 1) Knowledge of the work that is being done and applicable regulations.
- 2) Capacity (aka the time and energy) to do the coordination work.
- 3) Authority to direct the activities of all the contractors on that site.

The BC Forest Safety Council and the Federation of British Columbia Woodlot Associations have developed a Woodlot Safety Program that contains many useful forms to help woodlot owners manage prime contractor responsibilities, including:

- Prime Contractor pre-qualification checklist
- Prime Contractor agreement

- Pre-work with Prime Contractor
- Monthly and final inspection of the Prime Contractor

These forms and the entire Woodlot Safety Program are available on the Council and the FBCWA websites.

References: WCA 118 - Coordination at multiple-employer workplaces; OHSR 26.1.1 - Prime contractor requirements for forestry operations; OHSR 26.1.2 - Multiple-employer workplace

Resources

It is important to read and understand the exact wording of these rules. Check out the following resources where you can gain access to safety legislation, regulations and guides to help you manage safety on the woodlot:

- WorkSafeBC's website – OHSR Part 26 Forestry Operations and Similar Activities <http://www2.worksafebc.com/Publications/OHSRegulation/Part26.asp>
- WorkSafeBC's Guidelines for the Workers Compensation Act <http://www2.worksafebc.com/publications/ohsregulation/GuidelinesWorkersCompensationAct.asp?ReportID=24034>
- BC Forest Safety Council's Woodlot Safety Program <http://www.bcforestsafesafe.org/node/2238>
- BC Forest Safety Council's Prime Contractor Guide <http://www.bcforestsafesafe.org/node/2342>

Good safety management is all about planning, sharing knowledge and maintaining your woodlot – many of the things that you are already doing as a responsible landowner. Keep it up!

This is one of a series of Spotlight on safety columns produced for the Woodland Almanac by the BC Forest Safety Council. If you have a suggestion or would like to see a particular safety topic covered, please let us know. BSFSC has a team of safety advisors with more than 100 years of combined forestry and safety experience to provide trusted guidance and advice in all safety matters. Email safetyadvisors@bcforestsafesafe.org or call toll-free: 1-877-741-1060. The BCFSC is here to support industry achieve excellence in health and safety for all forest operations and their workers. ♦