

CLARION CORNER

The following message is from Reynold Hert, who has been Chief Executive Officer of the BC Forest Safety Council since March 2009. He has more than 30 years' industry experience, most recently as president and CEO of Western Forest Products where he led significant improvements in the company's safety record.

LEADING ON SAFETY Changing the results in a business means changing its methods and tools. Changing an entire industry's results takes a collective commitment to different ways of conducting business by its leadership.

Forestry leadership resolved to make significant changes five years ago when the industry faced increasing fatalities and serious injuries. Employees, government, the public, unions and companies themselves no longer accepted fatalities and serious injuries as part of doing business.

The industry aimed to reduce fatalities by following the recommendations of the provincial government's Forest Safety Task Force. From its recommendations, industry leadership adopted the Forest Safety Accord, and the BC Forest Safety Council was formed in 2004.

Today, leaders in companies of all types and size continue to work to change the system to reduce injuries. More than 4,000 companies have registered to become SAFE-certified, and almost 2,500 have succeeded.

Timber harvesting fatalities are down one-third; serious injury rates have dropped 25 per cent; the WorkSafeBC assessment per \$100 of payroll for this classification has decreased from \$11.39 in 2005 to \$8.50 in 2009. The number of accepted claims per 100,000 cubic meters of wood harvested is also declining. But we are not there yet. Despite improvements, people are still dying in our industry, and our serious injury rates are still nearly twice as high as the rate for all B.C. industries.

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A common error has been easing up on efforts after change produces initial improvements, when leadership believes "we are there, the task is done". Then progress slows and goes backward as changes have not been in place long enough and old habits return.

In spite of today's difficult financial times, many B.C. forestry companies continue to change their approach to reduce injuries and improve their business results.

Leaders of some SAFE-certified companies tell us about personally inspecting their operations, participating in incident investigations and doing assessments where the people in their operations may be at risk. We hear a number of small company owners saying they have learned a great deal about integrating injury reduction into their operational planning and how this highlights overall improvement opportunities.

Other industries, such as oil and gas, have undertaken a similar journey, one unfortunately, also driven by unacceptable levels of fatalities and injuries. Oil and gas is becoming an industry leader in injury reduction with one of B.C.'s lowest injury rates and the fastest improvement of a major industrial sector.

While the forest industry cannot say that we are one of the best yet, our injury rate has declined faster than the provincial average since we took the challenge on. With leadership at all levels actively continuing the effort, and everyone working every day to reduce injuries, our industry can also become a leader in health and safety, and forever shed our old reputation.



One year later, Coast Forest Products Association is working with government officials in Japan to incorporate results of the tremendously successful earthquake simulation test into the country's stringent building code.

Photo: Coast Forest Products Association

Coast Forest represents forest and paper companies in coastal British Columbia engaged in the harvesting and manufacturing of primary and added value forest products, and pulp and paper products. Together, these companies manufacture 95% of the lumber produced on the coast, 70% of the pulp and paper production and are responsible for 70% of the total harvest. The Association works to ensure that the five coastal species and their product lines have fair access to the global marketplace. Committed to providing leadership to create a thriving forest industry, Coast Forest facilitates cooperation between stakeholders and government on behalf of its member companies.



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