

Changes to WorkSafeBC's forestry regulations take effect May 1, 2008

Richmond, B.C., May 1, 2008 — Changes to forestry regulations in the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation* take effect today. The amendments address the changing nature of BC's forest sector and provide better protection to workers in the areas of supervision and planning, and increasing safety standards when working in proximity to machinery. As well, the regulations make it clear that the prime contractors must be sufficiently knowledgeable and have sufficient authority to fulfill the obligations set out in The Workers' Compensation Act. These new provisions were announced earlier this year following an extensive consultation process, public hearing and approval by the WorkSafeBC Board of Directors.

In addition to ensuring that prime contractors in the forestry sector have the necessary qualifications and authority to fulfill their legal responsibilities the regulations introduce a requirement to have a falling supervisor for all manual falling activities. New provisions dealing with log hauling will address speed and impairment by fatigue. In addition, the new provisions will also address the ability for employers to keep current with new equipment and technology.

"These amendments are the result of extensive consultation with industry stakeholders," says Michael Paine, Manager, Forestry Industry and Labour Services. "We believe the new regulations, in combination with industry commitment and WorkSafeBC's other ongoing prevention initiatives will take us all closer to the ultimate goal of zero traumatic fatalities in the forest."

The six significant amendments to the regulation that address the changing nature of the forestry sector and provide better protection for workers are:

- Prime contractors (section 26.1.1)
- Planning (section 26.2(2))
- Identification of hazard areas and safe work areas (sections 26.14.1 and 26.14.2)
- Falling supervisor (section 26.22.1)
- Log hauling (section 26.71.1 and 26.71.2)
- Added flexibility for industry innovation: equipment capabilities (section 12.1.1); dealing with partially cut trees (sections 26.25 and 26.29.3).

The full text of the [amended forestry section](#) of the Regulation is posted on WorkSafeBC's website at www.worksafebc.com.

"As with the introduction of any amendments to the regulation, we anticipate that there will be a transition period," says Paine. "Our officers will continue to work with employers to make sure that they have the information they need to understand and comply with these changes."

Interested employers or workers can contact their local WorkSafeBC office or go to the web site for more information.

Other initiatives by WorkSafeBC to make the woods safer have included the certification of fallers, recruitment of additional prevention and investigation officers, more inspections, and additional penalties where warranted.

In addition, WorkSafeBC supports and funds the industry-led BC Forest Safety Council, which was also created as a result of the Forest Safety Task Force recommendations. The Council continues to provide a mechanism for all the workplace parties to focus their attention on their sectors' challenges.

Three of the key findings in the Auditor General's report on safety in the forest industry call for:

- Strengthening the safety infrastructure
- Improved planning for safety, and
- Improvements in on-site supervision

These new regulations strengthen the legal standards and contribute significantly to addressing these concerns.

WorkSafeBC is an independent provincial statutory agency governed by a Board of Directors that serves nearly two million workers and about 197,000 employers. WorkSafeBC was born out of a compromise between B.C.'s workers and employers in 1917 where workers gave up the right to sue their employers and fellow workers for injuries on the job in return for a no-fault insurance program fully paid for by employers. The organization is committed to safe and healthy workplaces and to providing return-to-work rehabilitation and legislated compensation benefits.

For more information please contact:

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