
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2008FOR0099-000948
June 19, 2008

Ministry of Forests and Range
BC Timber Sales

BC TIMBER SALES SETS SAFETY CERTIFICATION STANDARD

VICTORIA – BC Timber Sales is improving forest worker safety by requiring all its contractors and those companies that conduct on-the-ground works under a timber sale licence advertised after Dec. 31, 2008 to be SAFE Company certified.

“We are committed to improving the safety of forest workers,” said Rich Coleman, Minister of Forests and Range. “Making safety certification a requirement will help ensure that forest operators have effective health and safety programs for their employees.”

Since April 1, 2007, BC Timber Sales has required its contractors in road building and reforestation, and those forest companies conducting on-the-ground work on Timber Sale Licences to be registered in the Safety Accord Forestry Enterprise (SAFE Companies) program of the B.C. Forest Safety Council. Effective Jan. 1, 2009, the requirement will move from registration to certification. A company obtains SAFE certification when an audit demonstrates that the company has effectively implemented a health and safety management system that meets the industry set safety standard.

“The endorsement and support of the provincial government have been critical to the successful launch and implementation of the SAFE Companies program,” said Tanner Elton, CEO of the BC Forest Safety Council. “The Province is not only ‘talking the talk’ of worker and worksite safety, they are also ‘walking the walk’ by requiring certification of their contractors and regional operations. They are treating worker safety as an overriding priority.”

BC Timber Sales is the single largest forestry operator in the province, managing about one-fifth of the province’s allowable annual cut. It manages public forest land, issues licences to harvest public timber, and is responsible for reforestation and road construction activities in areas that it manages. Its role is to provide a credible reference point for costs and pricing of timber harvested from public forests in B.C.

The SAFE Companies program was launched in 2006, and has registered 3,543 companies and certified 639 operations to date. The program has been established as an industry-wide standard, with 66 per cent of large employers certified, and nearly 30 per cent of small employers registered as of early June. Developed by the BC Forest Safety Council in conjunction with industry and WorkSafeBC, SAFE Companies is an initiative to develop, certify and annually audit the effectiveness of safety programs in forestry operations in British Columbia. SAFE certified companies benefit from reduced injuries and lost time, and are eligible to receive an annual rebate on their WorkSafeBC assessment premiums.

-30-

Media Sophia Proctor
contact: Public Affairs Officer
 250 387-4592

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province’s news feeds using RSS, visit the Province’s website at www.gov.bc.ca.