



SAFETY ALERT & BULLETIN OF THE MONTH

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Steep Slope Logging Assessments

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Operating heavy equipment on steep slopes is becoming increasingly common as timber supply challenges affect more operations throughout BC. Steep slope logging has specific legal requirements as outlined in [Part 26 of Occupational Health and Safety Regulations \(OHSR\)](#). A documented steep slope risk assessment must be completed along with the development of site-specific safe work procedures to ensure machine stability and operator safety.

Key Topics on Steep Slope Logging Assessments

When do you have to do an assessment?

[OHSR 26.16](#) sets out slope stability limits for different types of forestry equipment. If the manufacturer's maximum slope operating stability limit isn't known, then the regulation outlines specific slope limits to follow. The limit for rubber-tired equipment is 35%, tracked equipment is 40% and for other equipment designed specifically for steep slopes, the limit is 50%. These slope limits can be exceeded only when a risk assessment for that site has been completed. The information gathered in that assessment is then used to create safe work procedures specific to that site. These procedures are then communicated to and followed by the workers operating on those steep slopes.

What are the key parts of an effective assessment?

Getting out and walking the steep ground is essential. Work with the licensee or those involved in planning for the job site to get additional details on soil types, terrain stability and the location of rock bluffs, gullies or draws that may create higher risk situations.

Conduct the assessment as early as possible to give yourself time to implement a safe plan for the site, which includes specific equipment and operators for the steep sites, and appropriate safe work procedures. It often takes time to organize the right people, equipment and resources.

Why are these types of assessments valuable?

The plans and procedures developed from effective steep slope assessments can prevent rollover incidents which can lead to catastrophic results such as fatalities and significant machine damage.

Who is qualified to do a steep slope assessment?

The regulations require that assessments must be completed by a qualified person, meaning someone who is familiar with the machine and operator's capabilities as well as an understanding of the unique characteristics of the site. The best assessments are a team effort that involve the logging contractor supervisor and the licensee representative or planning forester. Seek out experienced operators and experts who can provide you with advice and suggestions on how to work safely in difficult terrain.



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What are some common pitfalls to avoid?

- Not following the plan. Make sure the operators attend a pre-work meeting where the site-specific procedures are reviewed and signed off. Close supervision is required on steep sites to make sure everything is going according to the plan and procedures.
- An assessment is not just a paperwork exercise. Procedures or assessments that are too general do not provide adequate instructions to the operators so conduct a meaningful, thorough assessment with specific procedures for each steep area within the block.
- Not marking hazards in the field. As part of the assessment, use flagging tape to mark out hazardous areas or machine free zones.
- Conducting assessments when the ground cannot be clearly seen. Avoid doing an assessment if the ground is obscured (such as deep snow) and hazards may be missed.



Resources

[Steep slope logging resource package](#)

[Steep slope logging risk assessment and site pre-work](#)

[WorkSafeBC steep slope logging checklist](#)

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BCFSC Latest News & Resources

[New Course – Legal Requirements for Forestry Blasting](#) - This FREE two-hour course reviews legislation and regulations that govern blasting activities in the forest industry. Completion of this training helps certified blasters achieve the six-hour annual training requirement.

[Webinar: First Aid Regulatory Changes – A Forest Industry Perspective](#) – Watch this recorded webinar to learn about the rationale behind the updated First Aid regulations and review key amendments to help employers ensure compliance.

[December Forest Safety News](#) – read the latest issue of the FSN

[FIRS App](#) - The full version of the BCFSC FIRS App is now available to download from your App store. Use the FIRS App to manage forms and documents for safety-related paperwork related to SAFE Companies and COR audit forms management.

BCFSC Training:

December 6 | [Basic Incident Investigation – Prince George](#)

This course provides a basic understanding of the methods, tools, and processes needed to conduct an incident investigation.

The 2025 training dates are now up on our website. Refer to the [Training section](#) for more information on upcoming classroom training and costs.

Worker Assessment and Training

Each forestry occupation requires different knowledge and skillsets to perform the job at hand. BCFSC worked with industry to develop competency-based standards, training, and assessment tools to help employers evaluate workers and complete on-the-job training.

Take a look at our [FREE online training and assessment forms](#) for Basic Forest Workers, Yarding, Mechanized Harvesting and Road Building.