



**Logging road safety changes in works**  
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The Ministry of Forests and the B.C. Forest Safety Council are hammering out protocols for radio use and signs on logging roads, hoping to come up with draft rules after a two-day session in Prince George.

The work is part of an ongoing effort to establish provincewide resource road guidelines to improve safety, but it received a boost following recommendations from an inquest this summer into the death of a logging truck driver in the Mackenzie area in March 2006.

"The inquest has provided impetus to push forward, where we had push back before. It's obvious it needs to be done," says MaryAnne Arcand, director of Forestry TruckSafe and Northern Initiatives for the B.C. Forest Safety Council.

Under consideration are standards for road signs that would be posted along resource roads every kilometre. The government and industry are also working out standardized radio protocols across the province, which will determine when log truck drivers call their positions using the posted kilometre signs and also in what manner.

For example, a determination is to be made whether loaded logging trucks would call their positions every kilometre, and whether empty logging trucks would generally remain silent except at must-call signs. The discussion also includes whether to standardize key radio use words -- up or down to identify loaded and unloaded trucks, or loaded or empty, for example -- across the province.

The protocols would be tied in with an effort by Industry Canada to reduce the number of radio channels in use, and then set aside particular frequencies only for resource road use. It's hoped that the changes, being piloted on Vancouver Island and in northern B.C., will reduce interference and straighten out a tangle of channels. The safety efforts could also tie into a new resource road act being developed by the province, and proposed safety regulation changes under consideration by WorkSafe B.C.

Norm Davis, the former chief engineer for the B.C. Ministry of Forests, has been hired by the province to help stickhandle the safety-improvement work on resource roads.

There has been fairly broad acceptance that the standardization would be a good thing, said Arcand. She said she believes the efforts have a better chance of succeeding because all the players have been pulled together under the B.C. Forest Council umbrella, which represents all sectors in the forest industry.

During the discussion Len Bedard from Revelstoke noted that you can put as many signs up as you want, but if truckers aren't listening to their radios or using them properly it is not going to help improve safety.

Bedard stressed improving safety will take education as well.

Burke Purdon, a longtime trucking operator in Prince George, said he believed the changes are headed in the right direction.

More than 30 log truckers and other forestry drivers have been killed in the Northern Interior since 1995.

The trucker killed in the crash the inquest looked at this summer, (Frank) Joseph Leroux, was killed at night when he and another logging truck driver met unexpectedly at a corner. While the two trucks

managed to avoid each other, Leroux's truck caught a tire at the snowed edge of the road where it narrowed and crashed in a small ravine.

Radio-calling procedures, and who is responsible for safety on logging roads, were key issues at the inquest.

*Length: 553 words*