



Forest Industry's Faller Certification Begins New Stage

Vancouver, B.C. – (December 19, 2007) – BC's forest industry is stepping up its approach to ensuring all fallers are working safely on the job. The BC Forest Safety Council is launching a long-expected annual renewal fee system for the province's 3,600 certified fallers, as well as piloting a re-evaluation system that will assess the skills of fallers and provide them with an opportunity to raise certification levels at least once every three years.

The safety of fallers working in BC's forests took centre stage in 2005 when 43 forest workers, seven of them fallers, died while on the job. The tragic death of veteran faller Ted Gramlich in November of that year and the subsequent coroner's inquest further highlighted the need for ongoing training and supervision to maintain safe work practices.

"We want to honour Ted and other fallers who have lost their lives by keeping all forest workers as safe as possible on the job," says Bill Bolton, senior advisor with the Council's Forest Worker Development program. "For two years, no certified fallers in BC have died while working in the woods, and this may be the most important legacy of the certification program and fallers like Ted Gramlich."

Bolton explained that certification is a requirement to work as a faller in BC as set by WorkSafeBC regulations. Licencees and employers are responsible for ensuring certifications are current.

"The approach to faller certification renewals is similar to that for driver's licenses which requires renewal fees while qualifying individuals for certain driving situations," says Bolton. "But we're taking it one step further by introducing formal on-site re-evaluation of the work practices of certified fallers."

The re-evaluation will take place at least once every three years and will assure the faller's skills continue to meet the existing BC Faller Training Standard. Those fallers with appropriate work habits will also be able to increase the certification level to work on steeper slopes and larger tree diameters. The re-evaluation program will be piloted in 2008 with the expectation to be fully operational and mandatory starting in 2009.

"The bottom line is we want all our workers to be safe in the woods," says Mike McKibbin, Western Fallers Association executive director. "Faller certification helps us ensure workers have the skills and knowledge to do the job safely and



successful re-evaluation will provide fallers with an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and professionalism.

Council-trained faller supervisors or bullbuckers working on site will be able to conduct the re-evaluations. Alternatively, qualified supervisor trainers (QSTs), who have also been trained by the Council, can be contracted for a fee to conduct the re-evaluation. The faller renewal fees that begin in January will cover program administration and quality assurance costs.

The renewal fee structure will apply to all faller certifications expiring in 2008 and beyond. Fallers will be required to pay \$150 annually to renew their certifications. Fees are reduced to \$100 if a faller is registered in the independent category of the Council's SAFE Companies program.

Fallers can find out about their renewals by phoning 1 877-741-1060 or emailing training@bcforestsafe.org. To find out more information about the BC Forest Safety Council and its programs visit their web site at www.bcforestsafe.org.

The BC Forest Safety Council is a not-for-profit society dedicated to promoting forest health and safety. It was founded and is supported by all major forestry organizations in BC and works with forestry employers, workers, contractors and the provincial government and agencies to implement changes necessary to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries in the forest sector.

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