



NEWS RELEASE

Forest Safety Ombudsman to Review Resource Road Safety

Vancouver, B.C. – (May 24, 2007) – The second comprehensive review to be conducted by BC’s Forest Safety Ombudsman, Roger Harris, will examine resource roads and how to improve their function and safety for both people in the industry and the general public who use them. Harris announced the review today in response to an existing and increasing concern about safety on BC roads.

In his first year as ombudsman, Harris received a total of 41 requests for assistance with resource roads as the number one issue. In particular, concerns were raised about road maintenance, cycle times, hours of work, road construction, funding, jurisdictional responsibility and financial responsibility. Harris will review each of these issues as well as other subjects raised that are relevant to improving safety on resource roads.

“BC has 47,000 kilometres of public roads and over 650,000 kilometres of resource roads,” says Harris. “Increased activity in the oil, gas and mining sectors, as well as increased harvest activity because of the pine beetle has made these roads busier and even more difficult to manage safely.”

In 2005, 11 logging truck drivers died on the job which accounted for 26 per cent of the total fatalities in the forest sector that year. In 2006, there were fewer truck driver fatalities, but the deaths accounted for 42 per cent, or five of the 12, total forest sector fatalities that year. So far in 2007, no logging truck drivers have died but 12 have been injured, some seriously.

“We continue to see serious injuries and fatalities in trucking and truck-related incidents,” explains Harris. “It’s time to figure out what’s going on and do something about it.”

Harris acknowledges the BC Forest Safety Council’s Forestry TruckSafe program is addressing the challenges on the province’s highways and resource roads. In 2006, the Council worked to create a cost-sharing formula for resource road maintenance, adopted vehicle identification plates for trucks, established regular communication regarding hazards and managed technical development work on steep-slope hauling standards.

Council staff also met with more than 6,000 truckers and owners throughout the province to discuss safety initiatives and challenges.

“We welcome Roger Harris’ review of resource roads,” says Tanner Elton, CEO of the Council. “Anything that helps to make these roads safer for the public and for workers in the industry is definitely worth supporting. In the meantime, we will continue our efforts to address driver risk factors and behaviours including focusing on a log truck driver certification program.”

Harris completed his first review as Ombudsman, *Not Out of the Woods*, in January of this year where he looked at training and certification within the industry. Harris found safety may be compromised by a critical labour shortage looming in the forest sector coupled with a significant drop in company-led training. His recommendations on how to improve safety in the industry and reverse the labour shortage have been forwarded to the Ministry of Forests and Range as well as the Ministry of Advanced Education. Both WorkSafeBC and the BC Forest Safety Council have taken steps to implement Harris’ recommendations that are under their jurisdiction.

To find out more information about Roger Harris’ first review on training and certification, visit the Council’s web site at www.bcforestsafe.org.

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