



Roger Harris.

Changing Landscape

About the Ombudsman Office

The office of the Forest Safety Ombudsman enhances safety in the BC forest sector by being a safe, confidential and persuasive agent for the raising and review of safety concerns throughout the sector and facilitating impartial and timely resolution of safety issues.

The Forest Safety Ombudsman is part of the BC Forest Safety Council and has a clear mandate to investigate safety issues and recommend the best means to address them. The Ombudsman uses review, recommendation, mediation and conciliation where necessary and also relies on international experience and leading examples of success to inform the process.

Contact the ombudsman

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Introduction

This is the ninth annual report from the Forest Safety Ombudsman office. This past year has seen an overall increase in the number of enquiries our office has received. It's not the number of enquiries that is significant but rather the nature/source of the enquiries. The Ombudsman office was initially established as a way for individuals, companies and organizations that work within the sector to resolve their issues, but in 2015 our office received more calls from the public who come in contact with the industry in some way.

2015 saw both advances on many Safety Performance indicators while also experiencing an increase in fatalities over 2014. It is still an industry that has one of the highest fatality rates after truck driving and construction, along with steamfitters and pipefitters.

Across Canada approximately 150,000,000 cubic meters of wood is harvested annually, of which BC accounts for approximately half of that volume, but over half of the fatalities. While it may not be reasonable to draw any direct comparisons -- as the conditions that the industry operates varies significantly from one coast to the other -- it is a statistic that continues to support the reality that the forest sector in BC is still a very high risk work place.

Outstanding Issues

2015 still had our office looking for closure in a number of areas: cycle time, resources roads, abuse/intimidation and emergency response, specifically access to emergency transportation from remote areas of the Province.

The relationship between the BC Forest Safety Council (BCFSC), the certifying agency and WorkSafeBC (WSBC), the regulator, is still not well defined from the perspective of companies and individuals working in the sector. Companies going through the SAFE Certification process continue to perceive some conflict between BCFSC and WSBC in terms of the roles and mandates of both organizations. Whether real or not, this lack of clarity is a distraction from the smooth execution of the program.

2015-2016

The numbers of enquiries to the Ombudsman office in 2015 were up slightly from 2014. As referenced in the Introduction, the nature and source of enquires has changed over the years. In many cases our office has become a resource for individuals, organizations and companies to use as a directory to point them in the right direction. The BCFSC itself has become a solid resource for our office to utilize in resolving issues; and their timely and focused response to enquiries has been of significant benefit to our office in resolving issues quickly. Enquiries in 2015 were received on issues related to:

- Abuse/intimidation in the workplace
- Resource Roads
- Equipment certification
- Faller Certification
- Faller supervision
- Working alone
- Emergency response
- SAFE Companies

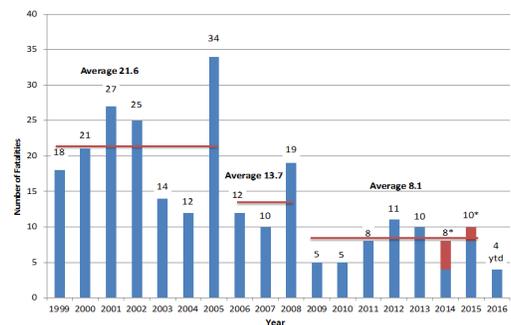
2015 tells two stories in harvesting. There is a good indication that we are seeing improvements in many of the traditional safety indicators (chart below). Our office attributes much of this success to the continued work by the BCFSC in:

- Improving the technical aspects of the standards by which firms in BC will operate
- Moving the cultural shift within the forest industry to one that is more professionally focused
- Expanding the participation of groups within the forest sector and government in BCFSC programs
- Continuing to raise awareness of safety within the industry and public.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
#Serious Injury Claims	209	225	240	253	194
#Time Loss Claims	860	887	1,007	969	897
Total Work Days Lost	73.5K	69.8K	71.6K	75.6K	60.8K
Claims Costs Paid (millions)	\$50.1	\$57.5	\$52.3	\$60.1	\$48.0
Assessable Payroll (millions)	\$942	\$1,012	\$1,082	\$1,115	\$1,147
Harvest Volume – m ³ (millions)	73.3	72.4	75.3	70.8	70.9

The graph (right) reflects the fatality rates over the last 16 years, although the trends continue to come down the increase in 2015 is concerning. Already in 2016 there have been four fatalities which continues to reinforce the need to keep work on both long- and short-term strategies focused on not just reducing but eliminating fatal incidents in the forest sector.

WSBC Accepted Harvesting Fatality Claims



Outreach

The Ombudsman office continued in 2015 to participate in a number of forest industry conventions, including Truck Loggers Association, Council of Forest Industries, Western Silviculture Contractors’ Association, Council of Forest Industry Annual Convention and we have participated in the Falling Technical Advisory Committee meetings.

2016 – Primary Focus

The 2015 saw our office initiate a review of Emergency Response, specific to access to air transportation. This review will continue to be the prime focus of the office in 2016 while continuing to respond to enquiries.

We will again attend and where requested participate in a number of forest industry AGMs and Conferences as part of our ongoing outreach program. These events and reviews raise the awareness of the BCFSC and support the BCFSC’s efforts to raise safety awareness within the industry, public and government.

Plan for 2016

The BCFS Ombudsman Office will be completing its review of “Emergency Response” specific to access to air evacuation and be releasing a report later in the year.

R.H.