



Health and Wellness Fact Sheet

- BC's forest industry is thought to be one of the most hazardous sectors in the province
- Unfit and unhealthy workers are more likely to make judgment errors leading to compromises in safety¹

The Challenges

The Age Factor:

- The average trucker is 48 years old
- The average log hauler is 54 years old
- 51% of fallers surveyed are over 35 years of age and 13% are over 56
- An aging workforce can mean higher risks of chronic disease, strokes, heart attacks, impaired vision and hearing, sleep apnea and more

Lifestyle:

- Irregular work hours, often in remote locations, contributes to poor eating habits and obesity
- Long periods of time operating machinery or performing repetitive motions can lead to fitness problems and smoking as a way to relieve boredom
- Long working hours means many forestry workers don't have easy access to medical professionals
- By self report, less than 20% of truckers wear seatbelts, compared to a provincial average of 87%
- Prolonged exposure to diesel fumes has resulted in respiratory ailments and has been linked to cancer

Substance Abuse:

- The use and abuse of legal and illegal substances is a significant concern in many forestry workplaces and is often thought of as a significant part of the forestry "culture"
- According to a BC Forest Safety Council commissioned study²:
 - Drug and alcohol consumption in BC exceeds the national average
 - Substance abusers are more likely to file workers' compensation claims, use medical benefits, be absent and are less productive than non-abusers
 - An estimated 10% of workers in the forest sector have consumed alcohol at work

¹ *LoggerHealth Project Overview*, September 2006

² *Working Collaboratively to Address Substance Abuse Issues in the Forest Sector*, Rick Publicover, June 2006

- An estimated 23% of workers in the forest sector have used drugs other than cannabis in their lifetime
- 38 to 50% of WorkSafeBC claims are related to substance abuse, costing over \$44-million³
- Recent RCMP and Commercial Vehicle Safety Enforcement roadside checks have found up to 30% of drivers use drugs and/or alcohol⁴

Action by the BC Forest Safety Council

- Two Forestry TruckSafe Summits have addressed the role substance abuse plays in crashes
- Faller Certification program includes a requirement for all fallers to be fit and ready to work
- 2006 Work Plan included a review of substance use in the sector in order to develop a better understanding and prepare options to deal with it
- Commissioned a study in 2006 on issues of substance abuse in the forest sector
- 2008 Work Plan includes the Council putting together a working group to recommend the next steps towards improving recognition, response, and management of substance use and health issues in the workplace

³ Estimated percentage based on Renascent Foundation Information applied to WCB Claim cost information

⁴ David Coverdale, BC Coroner's Service, Prince George