



BC **Forest Safety** Council
Unsafe is Unacceptable

NEWS

BC Forest Industry Launches SAFE Companies Program along with Safety Ombudsman and Safety Advocates

Vancouver, BC – (January 17, 2006) – The BC Forest Safety Council has announced a comprehensive industry-led initiative designed to dramatically improve safety in the forest sector. The SAFE Companies program requires all operations in the sector to become qualified as Safety Accord Forestry Enterprise (SAFE) companies. A Forestry Safety Ombudsman is also being created along with a number of Safety Advocates. The initiative is backed by BC's major forest companies, forest contractors, WorkSafeBC and the provincial government.

The initiative will benefit owners, licensees, contractors and workers. By endorsing the SAFE Company program, the executives of BC's largest forest companies have committed that their companies and all those who work for them will become certified under the program. Pilot programs involving a small number of companies across the province begin this spring, and the SAFE Companies program will be fully operational by the fall of 2007.

“This is a clear indication that we are committed to changing the culture of our industry and making safety an over-riding priority” said BC Forest Safety Council chair Jim Shepherd.

Under the program, companies will sign onto the Safety Accord of the BC Forest Industry and agree to put in place specific safety requirements appropriate to the size of the company. Companies will have safety audits to confirm they are meeting the SAFE Companies standard. SAFE certified companies become eligible for savings of at least five per cent on their WorkSafeBC payments.

To help companies become SAFE, up to six safety advocates located throughout the province will conduct pre-audit assessments, review safety procedures and advise companies about steps necessary to meet the SAFE standard.

In addition to the SAFE Companies program, the industry is putting in place an independent safety ombudsman to deal with workplace concerns with the ability to refuse unsafe work and deal with issues between contractors and licensees.

Industry will also be supporting a comprehensive three-year review of fatalities and serious injuries to be done by the Forest Safety Council, WorkSafeBC and the BC Coroners Office. It will result in a series of findings and recommendations on forest safety practices as well as providing a comprehensive data base for deaths and serious injuries in the sector over the last three years.

The SAFE Companies program is in addition to the Forest Safety Council's Faller Certification, Forestry TruckSafe and BC Safe Silviculture programs.

The Council also fully supports the renewed safety compliance strategy being implemented by WorkSafeBC, and the significant steps being taken with the Ministry of Forests and Range to promote safety.

"The forest sector is taking ownership of and responsibility for its safety record and is committed to dramatically improving safety in the industry," said Jim Shepherd. "The industry is taking this on as a priority starting with the CEO's of the large companies right down to line workers in transportation, harvesting and the mills."

The BC Forest Safety Council is funded by the industry as a partnership of forest companies, manufacturers and workers. Its mission is to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries in BC's forest industry by creating a culture of safety, promoting a safety aware legal regime, by ensuring confident and competent workers and safety qualified companies.

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