



ON THE ROAD TO SAFETY • truck safety

by MaryAnne Arcand, Director of Forestry TruckSafe

Driver Fatigue

As we all know, January 1, 2007, will see the implementation of reduced hours of service for truckers, limiting the allowable hours of driving and on duty time. The rationale behind the reduction in a trucker's work shift is that driver fatigue is a major causal factor for death and injury on the road, especially for truckers.

Many studies by medical researchers clearly indicate fatigue as a high risk to truckers. Most truckers only average between 4 and 5 hours sleep per night, which isn't enough to restore full alertness and functioning. Sleep deprivation is cumulative, which means it keeps building up, and you can't "catch up on your sleep." Eventually sleep deprivation results in mental impairment. After driving for 15 hours, you are as mentally impaired as if you had a .05 blood alcohol reading.

What is driver fatigue?

Fatigue is a general term commonly used to describe the experience of being "sleepy," "tired" or "exhausted." Fatigue is both a physiological (body) and a psychological (mental) experience.

Driver fatigue can severely impair judgment and can affect anyone. It is particularly dangerous because one of the symptoms is decreased ability to judge our own level of tiredness. Other symptoms vary between drivers, but may include: yawning, poor concentration, tired or sore eyes, restlessness, drowsiness, slow reactions, boredom, feeling irritable, making fewer and larger steering corrections, missing road signs, having difficulty in staying in the lane and microsleeps.

Driver fatigue is not only about time spent driving but relates to many factors including hours since last slept (hours of wakefulness) and time of day or night.

High risk times for fatigue-related fatal crashes are:

Nighttime/early morning—from 10pm to 6am

Afternoon—from 1pm–3pm

Fatigue-related crashes at these times of the day coincide with dips in the body's circadian rhythms, which program us to feel sleepy at night when we would normally be asleep and to a lesser extent in the afternoon hours.

Chronic sleep deprivation also has other long term effects, among them sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is becoming more common among truckers.

Sleep apnea is a potentially life-threatening condition that requires immediate medical attention. The risks of undiagnosed obstructive sleep apnea include heart attacks, strokes, impotence, irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure and heart disease. In addition, obstructive sleep apnea

causes daytime sleepiness that can result in accidents, lost productivity and interpersonal relationship problems.

What are the symptoms?

Excessive daytime sleepiness (that's where you end up nodding, or having "microsleeps" for 3 or 4 seconds) or frequent episodes of obstructed breathing during sleep, like snorting, gasping, or choking, sometimes to the point where you wake yourself up. You may not be aware of this symptom – but usually your bed partner is extremely aware of this!

Other symptoms may include:

Loud snoring, morning headaches, unrefreshing sleep, a dry mouth upon awakening, high blood pressure, being overweight, irritability, change in personality, depression, difficulty concentrating, excessive perspiring during sleep, heartburn, reduced libido, insomnia, frequent nocturnal urination, restless sleep, rapid weight gain, and confusion upon awakening.

While any one of us can experience some of these symptoms once in a while, if you recognize several of these symptoms for yourself over a longer period of time, you should see a doctor. There are simple treatments and techniques available that will reduce the risk of impairment due to fatigue caused by sleep apnea. Getting enough good, sound sleep will do a lot towards keeping drivers healthy and alert on the job.

Unfortunately, an unacceptable percentage of truckers are utilizing prescription and illicit drugs to stay awake and alert while driving. A recent study presented to the US Congress shows that drug use contributes to more than 40% of driver judgement errors in crashes involving commercial transports

The once-every-few-years physical required to keep your Class I license isn't good enough to tell you if you have any of the illnesses brought on by long-term fatigue. In fact, most people who have high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes don't even know it, and don't find out until they have a major health trauma such as a heart attack, stroke or diabetic blackout. We don't feel as good as we used to, and it's easy to blame it on age, or being tired, or getting older. Get checked out! We'll all feel better for it.

To find out more about sleep apnea, visit <www.sleepapnea.org>.

("Sleep and Sleep-Disordered Breathing in Commercial Long Haul Truck Drivers", Ricardo Stoohs et al., Stanford Sleep Disorders Clinic and Research Center, California, 1994; "Driving with Sleep Apnea", New England Journal of Medicine, Volume 340:881-883, March 18, 1999



FOREST SAFETY • health & safety

by Tanner Elton



BC Forest Safety Council
Unsafe is Unacceptable



More than hype

Unsafe is unacceptable. When they first saw it, a few people seemed to shrug off the BC Forest Safety Council motto as organizational hype, or some kind of political correctness.

“The working woods are dangerous,” they said, “and that’s to be expected. Right?”

Well, it’s clear that thinking represents only a small minority today. Across British Columbia, the forest sector has stepped up to help the Council make a reality of its slogan. Starting in late 2004, our industry has:

- Tested and formally certified 3,300 experienced hand fallers.
- Introduced training for brand-new fallers, and for supervisors in all areas of the industry.
- Put Forestry TruckSafe on the province’s resource roads and public highways.

- Laid the groundwork for an innovative Safe Silviculture program.
- Dramatically improved the quality and availability of safety information

We’re proud of these initial Council accomplishments, and recognize how much they depend on the support of the men and women working in the field.

On behalf of the Council, I congratulate everyone in the forest sector for taking part in what amounts to a public house—cleaning—for focusing on and committing to improving forestry safety.



Important as our first steps have been, they don't match the significance of what's underway now. The latest advance for forest safety in BC is an effort unprecedented for our industry and, I believe, any other.

Called SAFE Companies, this Council program involves all parts of the sector, from timber harvesting to silviculture and everything in between, as well as government agencies. Regardless of size, every BC forestry operation can earn a SAFE certification by passing an annual safety audit based on realistic, practical standards.

One pay-off is a rebate of at least five-per-cent on workers' compensation premiums. Another is a competitive advantage in going after new business - and ultimately in retaining work, as certification becomes the new minimum standard for future contracts.

By the end of 2007, we expect 2,500 companies to be registered or qualified for SAFE certification, altogether 60 percent of BC's active forestry employers. This includes all companies with 20 or more workers, three-quarters of those with three to 19 workers and half of all one- and two-person operations. At this rate, it won't be long before the entire sector is SAFE-certified.

What's driving this and other Council initiatives is the crucial need to improve our safety performance at all levels.

Forestry deaths and serious injuries devastate families, co-workers and their communities. They also saddle our industry with unnecessary monetary burdens. For BC timber harvesting alone, the direct and indirect costs of 2003-05 injuries and fatalities are conservatively estimated at \$432 million.

None of the human or financial pain is inevitable. In fact, more than 10 percent of our forest companies haven't recorded any serious incidents in a decade; many others maintain effective safety programs. We must follow their lead and pay more attention to prevention.

SAFE Companies is a solid foundation on which to build the safety initiatives and the continuous improvements needed to make safety the overriding priority it must be.

The Council's long-term goal is zero fatalities, zero serious injuries. This isn't hype either. The goal is difficult, but practical and realistic; working together we will achieve it.

Death and injury can no longer be considered acceptable overheads in a dangerous industry. We must do a better job of protecting the people who earn a living in the woods. As the not-so-old saying goes, unsafe is unacceptable.

Tanner Elton, Chief Executive Officer of the BC Forest Safety Council invites you to send comments to elton@bcforestsafe.org. Find out more about the Council at www.bcforestsafe.org.



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