

# Focus on Safety

by Bill Bolton

## Faller training that's literally a cut above

Anyone falling trees for a living in BC must be certified by the BC Forest Safety Council in order to do the work. Most people first think this legal requirement applies only to production falling, but silvicultural falling is also included. If your silviculture project involves falling trees at least six inches in diameter, it stops being simple silviculture. Whoever does the job must hold a faller certification; nothing else will satisfy regulations of WorkSafeBC.

What does this mean in practical terms?

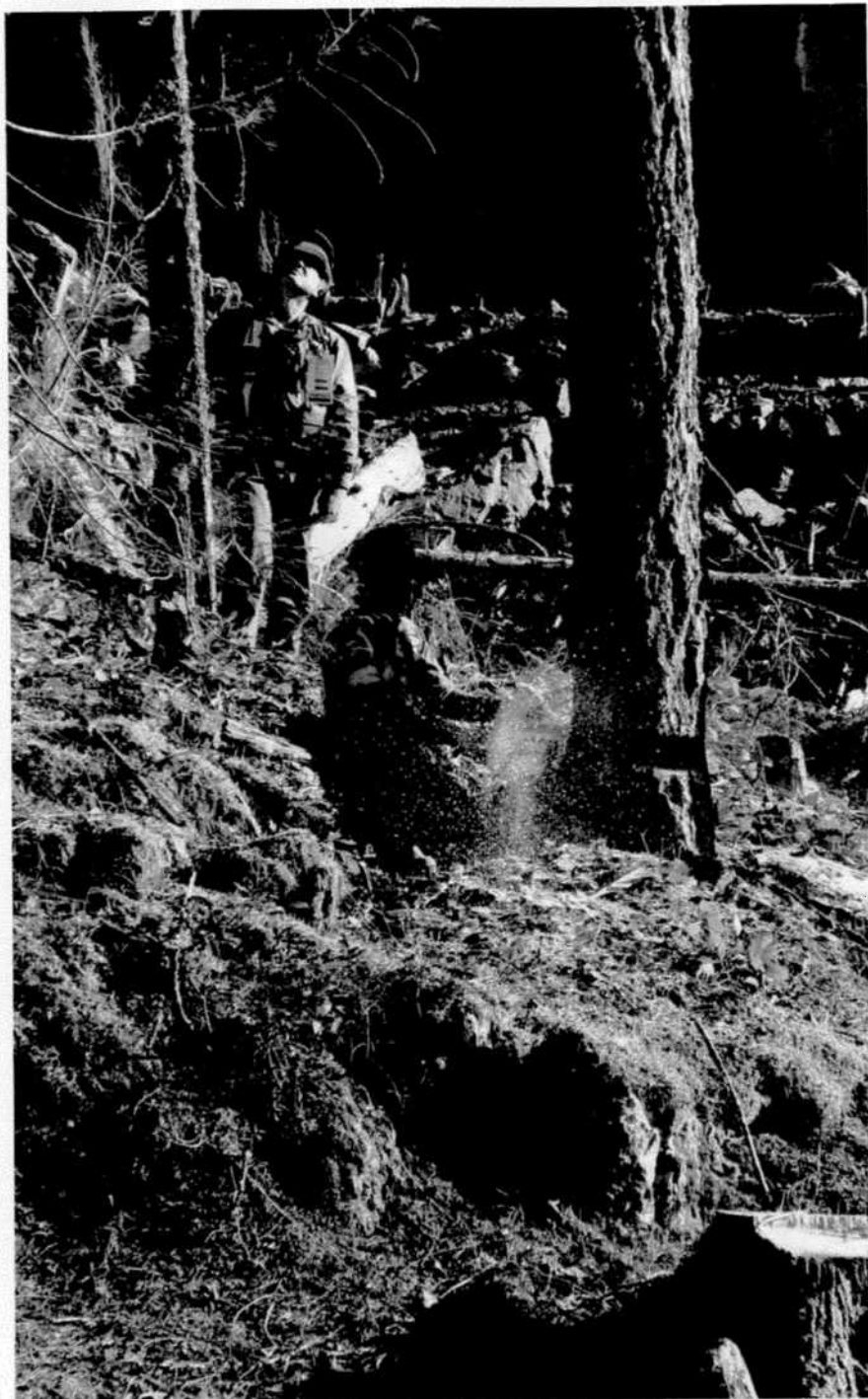
On the ground, where the work needs to be done, employers should be sure that fallers carry valid log books and wallet cards. The logbook documents where and for whom each faller has worked, and in what kinds of timber and terrain. The wallet card specifies the faller's qualification level in terms of allowable tree diameter and maximum acceptable degree of slope. Both criteria are established by certification test results.

There are no substitutes for these legal proofs of certification and experience. Until recently, fallers could earn them in three ways - being certified in a grandfathering process, passing challenge tests open to experienced fallers, or successfully completing a program under the BC Faller Training Standard.

More and more, however, new certification holders will largely be newly trained fallers. This is because most experienced BC fallers were grandfathered, a process that ended last summer, or have already taken the challenge tests.

Future fallers will enter the workplace through programs using the provincial faller training standard that was developed jointly by the Council, the forest industry, labour, and WorkSafeBC in order to replace a chaotic and uneven mix of both effective and seat-of-the-pants training programs. Until the current system took hold, no one could depend on consistently safe work practices. In a few cases, "training" involved little more than handing chain saws to green fallers and sending them into the bush.

Modern fallers need to be professionals who apply uniform work standards taught



B.C. Forest Safety Council faller trainee, Eric Sigurdsson, falls a tree with the help of Qualified Supervisor Trainer Steve Telosky at a worksite near Port Alberni. Photo courtesy of Niomi Pearson.

through a combination of comprehensive training and on-the-job performance. This is the reality now in our province. It is intended to foster, with a best-practices approach, three key characteristics in BC fallers:

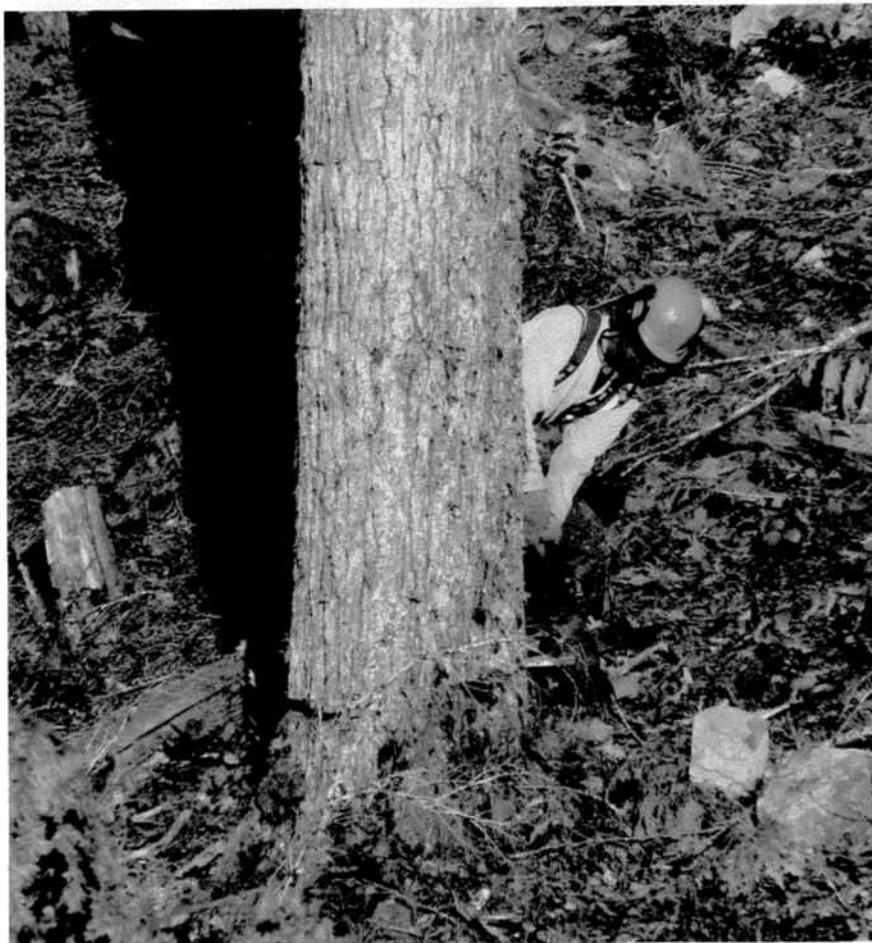
- Recognizing hazards and completing a risk assessment of each situation before making any cuts.
- Continuously working to improve personal workmanship.
- Finding qualified assistance when you need help or are uncertain of your abilities.

The means for this training and experience

comes through the Council's new faller training program, consisting of five days of classroom instruction, 25 days of field training, and up to 180 days of supervised work experience.

The bottom line is that we're teaching fallers to arrive mentally and physically equipped to work safely and productively, so everyone goes home in one piece at the end of the day.

Bill Bolton is senior advisor for Forest Worker Development at the BC Forest Safety Council, which oversees all Council training in the province. More information on these and other Council programs is found at [www.bcforestsafe.org](http://www.bcforestsafe.org).



*B.C. Forest Safety Council faller trainee, Ryan Sampson, prepares a tree for falling at a worksite near Port Alberni. Photo courtesy of Niomi Pearson.*

## CERTIFYING FALLERS IN BC

Two paths lead to the certification required to fall trees in BC. Those new to the forest industry must complete the requirements of the provincial faller training standard, while experienced fallers can challenge the standard. Here's what is available.

### TRAINING

As we go to press, enrolments remained open for the following sessions scheduled in June 2007, coordinated for the BC Forest Safety Council by Malaspina University-College:

- Port Clements on the Queen Charlotte Islands for classroom instruction; field training site to be arranged
- Parksville for classroom instruction; field training site to be arranged in the Port Alberni area

For information on these and future offerings, contact Marion Knost at Malaspina University-College at 250-740-6364, or email her at [knost@mala.bc.ca](mailto:knost@mala.bc.ca).

### CHALLENGE

Experienced fallers can challenge the faller training standard by completing an initial skills assessment and passing a written test and a field certification test.

Those ready to make the challenge can obtain more information from Gary Banyas at the Council's office in Nanaimo at 250-741-1060, 1-877-741-1060, or [banyas@bcforestsafe.org](mailto:banyas@bcforestsafe.org).