



Changing Forestry Culture

Safety is more than a legislative process, it's a way of doing business.

In 1972, I got my first job in the forest industry working in a remote camp on the Queen Charlotte Islands. The most significant event in the forest sector that year was the fallers' strike. The strike revolved around the decision by the forest sector to move from paying fallers piecework to a day rate. The main driver for this change in direction was safety.

Conventional wisdom was: If we moved away from payment for production to a system based on time, safety performance in the forests would improve. In 1972, before the change, 61 people lost their lives working in the forest sector. In 1973, that number rose to 63.

In 1986, the industry once again experienced a strike in the forest sector. This time the issue involved contracting out. The union's goal was to curb the practice, limiting the expansion of phase contractors in the forest sector. Increasing the number of contract operators was identified then, as it has been today, as contributing to creating an unsafe

workplace. In 1986, 29 workers were killed. By 1988, that number had risen to 50.

Over the course of the last 40 years, the province has experienced a variety of governments and forest policies. From the policy changes of the 1980s to the Forests Practices Code of the 1990s, or the Forest Revitalization Policies of 2001, the one constant for the forest sector has been the word "change."

In 1996, in a highly prescriptive operating environment, 39 families lost a loved one who worked in the forests of British Columbia. Over the last six years, under the current forest policy, the number of fatalities has gone

from a low of 11 to a high of 45.

If the lessons of the past 40 years have taught us anything, it is that safety is much more than just legislative initiatives. Since 1972, with varying labour climates and forest policies, the only constant is that too many people continue to lose their lives working in the forests industry.

There is little evidence to support the notion that forest policy or labour contracts are the defining component for reducing the number of fatalities. If making the workplace safer was as simple as passing legislation or adding a dollar to contract rates, someone

Photograph: BC Forest Safety Council

New young worker web site

WorkSafeBC launched its new young worker web site, raiseyourhand.com, featuring an ever-growing quilt of "hands." Young workers can log on to the site, customize their own hand, and post their personal experiences about workplace safety.

By visiting raiseyourhand.com, young workers will have the opportunity to make their voices heard, share their experiences, and access a wealth of resources for helping them stay safe on the job.

Encourage young workers to visit raiseyourhand.com today!



WORK SAFE BC

WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



One safe trip at a time

Safe roads, loads and drivers — these goals have us building partnerships to deliver:

- » Solid safety supports like accurate road information
- » Other practical solutions for all road users

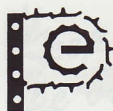
From start to finish, that's what forest industry drivers need — so all trips end safely for everyone on the road.

www.bcforestsafe.org 1.877.324.1212



BC Forest Safety Council

Unsafe is Unacceptable



POLLARD EQUIPMENT (CHILLIWACK) LTD. Parts & Service For All Makes

**SPECIALIZING IN CATERPILLAR EQUIPMENT
AUTHORIZED DEALER FOR (TREK) UNDERCARRIAGE
AND GEHL CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT**

44755 Yale Road W.
Chilliwack, BC
V2R 4H3

TLA

Bus: 604-793-2287
Fax: 604-793-2292
Toll Free: 1-800-665-3272

would have solved the problem years ago.

The forest industry is a complex business. Changes in technology, environmental operating pressures, harvesting techniques, and management regimes; competition for skilled workers; lack of continuity and economic pressures all impact safety in the workplace.

Every day, professional forest workers are called upon to make hundreds of decisions considering all of the variables in front of them. The impact of the wrong move at the wrong time in many cases is catastrophic.

Having an appropriate legislative and regulatory framework is important for establishing a safe workplace. But it is just one component. Any long-term solution will only come about from a collective approach. That is why the BC Forest Safety Council (BCFSC) has such a vital role to play.

Historically, companies or sectors would initiate and implement their own "safety programs" with varying degrees of success. Safety was viewed as a program rather than a way of doing business.

The BCFSC, for the first time, brings all of the worker organizations that have a part to play into a single industry organization. It has taken safety out of the boardrooms and union halls to deal with the challenges right across the industry spectrum at an operational level. Initiatives like BC Safe Silviculture, Forestry TruckSafe and the Faller Certification Program are all examples of how the council is already making a difference.

But possibly the most important initiative is the SAFE Companies program. This establishes minimum safety standards that everyone involved in the forest industry has to adhere to. It deals with what has been termed the "race to the bottom" by establishing clear operating audited-procedures for major licensees, contractors, owner-operators and regulators. It elevates workplace safety from program status to becoming the only way of doing business.

Changing the culture and history of the forest industry is no small task. The most important participant at the table with the BC Forest Safety Council are members of the public, who have taken a keen interest in ensuring that, for this industry, *Unsafe is Unacceptable*. TLA

Roger Harris served as minister of state for forest operations in B.C. from 2003-2005. A career forest worker, he suffered a serious accident in 1986. He currently serves as B.C.'s Forest Safety Ombudsman.