

Don't shoot the messenger!

By MaryAnne Arcand

Road safety is a passion for me. My sister was killed in a single vehicle crash at 17 years old, and I'll never forget the impact that had on our family. I still keep waiting for her to come through the door. Losing someone in a vehicle crash leaves a big hole in your life, a space where that person should have been. My personal experience is probably why I took on coordination of the Forestry TruckSafe program.

The Forestry TruckSafe program is part of the BC Forest Safety Council. The Safety Council is a non-profit organization, not a part of the government. Our funding comes from a portion of the forest industry's remittances to WorkSafeBC, as well as other sources. Our goal is to eliminate fatalities and injuries in the forest industry in BC. The Forestry TruckSafe program, of which I am director, addresses issues in the transportation sector of the forest industry – log hauling and transportation of forest industry workers to and from work, including silviculture. My job is essentially that of an "advocate" or "watchdog", working on government and industry to fulfil their obligations to safety on the roads. Another aspect of my work is to provide information to truckers and other industry drivers about regulations, policies and changes that will affect them in their work, and to work with them to create a culture of safety on the roads. So don't shoot the messenger! I didn't make the rules, I'm just trying to help everyone understand them, and change them where need be.

As Director of Forestry TruckSafe, I look at all the different aspects of road safety in the context of the forest industry: safe roads, safe loads, safe trucks, and safe drivers. Each of those four have hundreds of issues attached, everything from engineering and maintenance, to driver education and training, to driver health. In 2005 we held two Forestry TruckSafe summits, at which all the players, including drivers and driver reps, identified the issues that needed to be worked on and created an action plan. I'm still working on that plan today – and while many of the smaller points are being addressed and we are seeing changes, the bigger ones that involve government and regulation and jurisdiction have a long way to go.

I spend a lot of time on the road, all over BC, listening to truckers, and passing on information that will hopefully be helpful. I also do a newsletter bi-weekly, which we send out by email or fax, that helps keep truckers up to date on what's going on in the industry regulation-wise, trends, opportunities, and a section called, "Your Voice", where truckers' letters and opinions are posted. If you're interested in receiving it, go to www.bcforest-safe.org/trucksafe and click on the link to subscribe to

"Rumblings".

What I hear from truckers across the province runs in several common themes: road maintenance (actually the lack of), roads not engineered for current volumes and configurations, inconsistent "rules of the road" and radio calling procedures, inconsistent application of regulations, fatigue, cycle times and rates. I also hear a lot about the need for better training and monitoring of drivers.

I can't do anything about rates, but over the next series of issues of Pro-Trucker, I will be explaining what we are doing or trying to do with a lot of the other issues identified by truckers. I'd also like to hear from you, either in response to an article or an issue, or just what you think is wrong with the system and what needs to be done. You can contact me at arcand@bcforestsafesafe.org or (250)612-2267. I'm looking forward to hearing from you. And remember, "Unsafe is unacceptable".

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