

Safety

» While much of the forestry industry in the province suffered from the double threat of pine beetle infestation and the softwood lumber dispute, Fort Nelson remained unaffected. The products created in Fort Nelson are not subject to the softwood lumber duties and tariffs, and their forests did not suit the palate of the mountain pine beetle.

Valuable in many ways

Aside from contributing to the economic well-being of Fort Nelson, the forest plays an important role in the community spirit of the town.

The large population of First Nations people still use the forests for hunting and trapping, as well as cultural traditions such as the gathering of bark and other materials for art and craftworks.

The town's tourism industry is also built around people visiting to take advantage of the hiking, birding, photography, camping, fishing and other outdoor activities. Tour operators rely on the forest areas to attract visitors.

"We have a fairly big range program here that is a little different than range in the rest of the province because we use horses to support our outdoor experiences," said Mary Viszlai-Beale of the Ministry of Forests and Range in Fort Nelson. "There are businesses that need horses to be able to take their clients out. To take horses out on Crown land they need to have range tenure."

The Muskwa-Kechika Management Area—a 6.3-million-hectare protected forest area known as the Serengeti of the North—is one of the last parcels of true wilderness south of the 60th parallel. The area has almost no roads and is home to a predator-prey ecosystem that gives it its nickname. FW

Fewer deaths in 2006

While the number of forestry-related deaths has dropped, one is still too many in the eyes of the B.C. Forest Safety Council

by TANYA LAING MOORE

In a recent press release, the B.C. Forest Safety Council announced that forest industry-related deaths had decreased significantly in 2006 compared to the previous year. There were 12 on-the-job fatalities within the province last year, down from 43 in 2005. However, as encouraging as those statistics are, there is still room for improvement, according to **Tanner Elton**, B.C. Forest Safety Council's chief executive officer.

Strong leaders

"We're moving in the right direction, but 12 fatalities is still unacceptable," said Elton. "There are a lot of factors that have gone into the reduction. If we had to encapsulate it, it boils down to leadership."

Elton said that leadership has been exemplary on every level; in the coming years, that leadership must be capitalized upon to further reduce the industry's fatalities.

According to Elton, the government has been uniquely involved in the process, not only in the creation of the rules, but in the playing of the game with Timber Sales B.C. and other government-related lumber businesses.

"As a result of the government coming on side, we've been able to do a number of things," said Elton. "One of them has been to raise awareness; there has been an unprecedented amount of activity around making people aware."

Elton said that even within the sector, few people had a full understanding of the impact safety issues had both within

and outside the industry. However, the push from the B.C. Forest Safety Council to raise awareness and convince independent companies to follow the guidelines is paying off.

Elton pointed out the importance of the Safe Companies Initiative, which certifies companies that support and enforce safety procedures and training, and rewards them with lower WorkSafeBC premiums.

Safety statistics

2006 Fatality Statistics

Manual tree falling	0
Harvesting	2
Log hauling	5
Silviculture	0
Helicopter logging	0
Forest fire fighting	0
Sawmills	1
Travelling to/from work	0
Other	4


Total 12

2005 Fatality Statistics

Manual tree falling	7
Harvesting	11
Log hauling	8
Silviculture	0
Helicopter logging	4
Forest fire fighting	0
Sawmills	4
Travelling to/from work	7
Other	2

Total 43

Source: B.C. Forest Safety Council



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Safety is an overriding priority.



BC Forest Safety Council
Unsafe is Unacceptable



Only 12 forest-related deaths in 2006

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