



## Supervisor Talk:

# Good communications skills critical to be an effective supervisor

By Gerard Messier, RPF, CRSP



*“ Dear Supy,  
What would you say is the most important skill for a supervisor?  
Manager Mike ”*

Hi Mike, that’s a good question and a difficult one since we rely on our supervisors for so many things – direction of the actual work being done, training and motivation of workers, quality assurance, troubleshooting and solving problems, and working with contract managers and other stakeholders, just to name a few. However, when you drill down into all of these, there is a common element and that is communication. A supervisor with good communication skills is more effective at all of their tasks.

Let’s start with explaining the difference between information and communication. Providing information is just giving out data while communication is getting through to your audience and having them understand the message. It also involves listening to them and understanding their feedback so that you can adjust your communication to be clear, well understood and not open to misinterpretation. Think about meetings you have attended and maybe even meetings that you’ve run. Was the audience engaged or not? Did they quickly forget about what was talked about? Did lots of people put on their sunglasses so you couldn’t see them close their eyes? That’s happened to me!

In the examples above, it was mostly about just giving out information – a talking head. As a supervisor you really want to be effective, so consider the following tips to help increase engagement during any communication – be it an email, text, one on one conversation or a crew meeting:

- Capture their attention – Explain how the information is immediately useful to them. People need to know why they need to learn something or how it solves a problem that they have or how it will prevent them from having to deal with issues down the road.

- Timing is everything – Get to know your crew’s schedules and communicate when they are ready to listen. Late Friday afternoon or when everyone is hungry or tired are not good times.

- Location, Location, Location – Don’t try to have a conversation in a noisy or distracting environment or when it’s pouring rain. Hop into the cab of a pickup if possible to have a quiet and comfortable conversation. And always choose the right place for the right conversation. Give positive feedback publicly, and other feedback privately.

- Right tool for the job – Supervisors have lots of options: face to face, radio, cell phone call or text. Think about the importance of the message, complexity of the topic and how much feedback you need from the other person before choosing your communication tool. Use visuals where you can, maps and photos can work really well too.

- Choice of language – Use the right words that will be easily understood. Don’t rush your message and avoid jargon or slang. No one will ever complain if you make something too easy to understand.
- Take some time to plan out difficult conversations. Think about how the other person or group is going to react to your message and how best to respond to that.
- Pay attention to your body language which speaks way louder than any of the words that you say. If you don’t believe your message, your body will say so even if your words don’t.
- Repetition can be a good thing sometimes. People need to hear a message several times before it sticks so don’t be afraid to cover the same ground with your communications.

**No one will ever complain if you make something too easy to understand.**

I’ll leave you with an interesting quote that should motivate you to focus on improving your communication skills:

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

George Bernard Shaw 🌟

## Forest Supervisor training continues to be a popular course across the province

At a Forest Supervisor – Leadership and Professionalism Course earlier this year, one silviculture company sent five of their staff to attend. Discussions included what makes for a good leader and the skills that when perfected help support effective supervision, improved safety and operational performance. 🌟



### WHAT IS A LEADER?

- PROVIDE INSTRUCTION
- ~~HOW~~ MOTIVATING - COLLABORATIVE
- VERSATILE
- KNOWLEDGEABLE
- GOOD LISTENER
- PATIENT
- ORGANIZED
- CHARISMATIC / GOOD SPEAKER
- CALM UNDER PRESSURE / CONFIDENT
- LOGICAL
- UNDERSTANDING / COMPASSIONATE
- APPROACHABLE

## Recent Prince George Small Employer Occupational Health and Safety training session



Trainer and regional safety advisor, Mike Pottinger, leading a recent occupational health and safety training day for small employers in Prince George. 📍

## Preventing collisions with wildlife webinar recording available to view

More than 200 participants registered to join the hour-long webinar on April 24, 2019 on preventing collisions with wildlife, hosted by Road Safety at Work and with additional presenters from the BC Forest Safety Council and the Wildlife Collision Prevention program. To view a recording of the webinar (1 hour) and see other links to helpful supporting materials, please see: <https://roadsafetyatwork.ca/workshops-and-webinars/webinars/preventing-collisions-with-wildlife/>

You may also view and/or download the presentation slides here: <https://roadsafetyatwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Preventing-Collisions-With-Wildlife-V5-Apr-23-19.pdf> Note: slide 16 provides the highway routes with the highest frequency of wildlife crashes.

### The illusion of the open road

**Straight stretches  
Good road conditions**

False confidence  
Increase speed

Reduce vigilance  
Increase complacency

**As speed increases:**

- reaction and stopping distances increase
- more severe consequences if collision occurs

Photo credit: Gayle Innes

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## Upcoming training

If you would like to see how a training course can meet your organization's needs, please let us know. We are committed to working with you to find the right training solution. We may be able to tailor a program to your specific needs and deliver it in a way that is most convenient for your operations.

### Scheduled training for the next few months

(does not include tailored sessions):

<b>Falling Supervisor training</b>	October 17	Castlegar (2)	
June 10	Campbell River	October 18	Castlegar (3)
October 21	Vernon	October 24	Prince George (1)
<b>Basic Incident Investigation training</b>	October 24	Kamloops (2)	
June 12	Langley	October 25	Kamloops (3)
September 20	Kamloops	<b>Internal Auditor BASE 4 Workshop</b>	
September 23	Campbell River	June 13	Richmond
October 8	Prince George	<b>Individual Owner Operator OHS and Refresher training</b>	
<b>Forest Supervisor training</b>	<b>Module 1: Due Diligence: 2 days (1)</b>	June 22	Teleconference
<b>Module 2: Communications: 1 day (2)</b>	<b>Module 3: Leadership &amp; Professionalism 1 day (3)</b>	July 27	Teleconference
June 10	Langley (1)	August 24	Teleconference
June 13	Cranbrook (2)	September 28	Teleconference
June 14	Cranbrook (3)	October 26	Teleconference
July 11	Prince George (2)	<b>Joint Health and Safety Committee training</b>	
July 12	Prince George (3)	October 7	Prince George
July 18	Vernon (2)	October 9	Langley
July 19	Vernon (3)	<b>Small Employer OHS and Refresher training</b>	
September 12	Kamloops (1)	June 4	Castlegar
September 26	Campbell River (1)	June 6	Vernon
October 3	Castlegar (1)	July 11	Langley
October 10	Langley (2)	August 8	Williams Lake
October 11	Langley (3)	September 12	Campbell River
October 17	Campbell River (2)	October 17	Prince George
October 18	Campbell River (3)		

View the 2019 training calendar here: [www.bcforestsafef.org/fscapps/calendar/calendar.php](http://www.bcforestsafef.org/fscapps/calendar/calendar.php). Please check back often as course dates may change if there is insufficient participant enrollment. All training is offered on a not for profit, cost-recovery basis. Email [training@bcforestsafef.org](mailto:training@bcforestsafef.org) or call toll-free **1-877-741-1060** for general information, or email Gary Banys at [banys@bcforestsafef.org](mailto:banys@bcforestsafef.org) to answer any questions you might have about course content and/or about tailoring courses to meet your company's needs at a location of your choice. 📍

### Key take-aways:

- There is significant under-reporting of collisions with wildlife
- Estimated 24,400 wildlife collisions each year costing millions of dollars
- Most crashes happen in Southern Interior of the province followed by Northern Central and Vancouver Island
- 76% of reported crashes are deer; 7% are moose followed by elk and bear
- North Central has the highest moose incidents at 28%
- Don't be trapped by the illusion of the open road – more severe crashes happen on straight stretches of good roads
- Fall – dawn and dusk are the highest risk periods for incidents
- Help all your workers who drive by doing reminders spring and fall, identifying high risk locations and reinforcing good driving practices and wildlife awareness tactics. 📍