BC **Forest Safety** Council
Unsafe is Unacceptable

FOREST INDUSTRY SAFETY ALERT

Close Call/Serious Incident: Heat Exhaustion

Location: Squamish River

Date of Incident: June 17, 2009

Details of Incident:
On June 17, a field engineer was walking an archaeology crew around heli-blocks in Squamish River. The weather was not overly hot, but humidity was high, and the air was 'muggy'. The ground in this area is rugged and steep. The crew began the day at 7:30am. By about 2:30pm they had covered off nearly all the area and began in the direction of the Heli-pad, approximately 1100m North of their location.

Approximately half way to the pad the crew took a break, as they were tired and the walk to the pad was a grind. The crew had both food and water during the break. At about 3:20 they began their final push to the pad, about 250m uphill. When they were within about 100m of the pad, one member of the crew began to complain of blurry vision. The crew then had a longer break and took some more water.

When they got to the pad, the field engineer had the crew member take the first trip to the airport. The crew member stated that he had never been so exhausted, and he was somewhat confused with small things (trying to put an empty water bottle in his vest unsuccessfully many times, and was forgetful of his belongings around the pad).

When the field engineer arrived at the airport he asked the crew member how he was feeling. The crew member stated that he was not feeling well, he thought he had stopped sweating, and was asking what the symptoms of shock /and or heat stroke were.

The field engineer, noticing that the crew member's condition had worsened, immediately called 911. While waiting for the paramedics to arrive the crew moved him to the coolest area around, took off some of his clothing, and poured cold water onto a cloth and padded his upper body.

Paramedics arrived approximately 10 minutes later and took over. The crew member was taken to Squamish hospital for observation.

Recommended Preventative Actions:

1. **Review of Heat Stress:** Infinity staff had discussed heat stress during their monthly safety meeting on June 12. The safety coordinator had reviewed the WSBC document on heat stress with staff, which is found at the following link:

   http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/health_and_safety/by_topic/assets/pdf/heat_stress.pdf

   In addition, heat stress was identified as a hazard as part of the pre-work for this project, and field staff were packing plenty of water in the woods. The field engineer quickly recognized the archaeology crew members' condition and took appropriate action, in calling for assistance and moving the crew member to a cool area, as well as cooling the crew member with water.

2. **Measures to avoid heat stress:** Infinity-Pacific has communicated this incident to all staff/contractors, and has reviewed steps to avoid heat stress, such as:
   - Packing plenty of water
   - Eating salty foods
   - Taking adequate breaks
   - Wearing cool, light colored clothing.

3. **Communication with Contractors:** Infinity-Pacific will email all relevant safety publications, bulletins, alerts to contractors to share with their staff, and will email pre-works to contractors for review prior to the tailgate pre-work conducted before starting work. In addition to the attached pre-work, the email will also outline all identified hazards for the project, and steps to be taken to reduce the hazards.

For more information, please call:

Chris Gruenwald, Safety Coordinator
Infinity-Pacific Stewardship Group Ltd.
604-460-1390 Ext 231

Infinity-Pacific Stewardship Group