

FOREST SAFETY NEWS

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Preparing for the Wildfire Season

As summer approaches, the impact of wildfires across BC weighs heavily on our minds. In the past two years, British Columbia has experienced devastating and lengthy wildfire seasons with hot, dry conditions contributing to significant wildfire events, leaving BC residents on edge and anxiously waiting for what this year will bring.

The concern is understandable, given the province has already observed advanced fire behavior and conditions, specifically in the Interior due to current drought conditions.

Since April, over 300 fires have occurred across BC, creating several evacuation orders and alerts, as well as multiple air quality warnings due to smoky skies in several areas of the province. This activity may be due, in part, to the weather conditions last October, which was one of the driest and warmest on record. The drought conditions in forests were much higher than normal for the late fall, and the elevated drought codes continued to persist and carry over from the fall into spring 2023 in certain regions.

These drought areas became vulnerable to fires. Fine, dry fuels are susceptible to ignition and can spread quickly, even in wet spring conditions, due to gusty winds and a phenomenon known as the spring dip. This is the period after the snow melts and before significant spring rainfall when the moisture content of fuels remains low. These types of fires can burn deeper and for longer periods in areas where drought conditions are occurring.

Although it may be too early to fully predict the extent of the upcoming wildfire season, the BC Wildfire Service notes the extent of any fire season will be dependent mostly upon weather conditions but also in large part to human behaviour. But rest assured, they will be well staffed this year with close to 2,000 wildfire staff and approximately 700 contractors at the ready to fight fires this summer.

We all need to do our part and help reduce the risk of human-caused wildfires by being diligent in our efforts and following the guidelines set out by the BC Wildfire Service. It's essential

to have an Emergency Response Plan in place should a fire occur on your worksite and ensure your crew is properly trained and fully understands the ERP procedures. Practicing them often with various scenarios can help protect yourself,



Welcome to the Summer edition of Forest Safety News, covering news about safety topics in forestry. This is YOUR safety newsletter. We look forward to your input and feedback! Email the editor at editor@bcforestsafesafe.org or call 1-877-741-1060.

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your crew, and your equipment. The BC Forest Safety Council (BCFSC) has several resources that can help prepare you for such an emergency.

- [Prepared BC | Wildfire Preparedness Guide](#)
- [Safe Work Procedures](#)
- [Emergency Response Planning](#)
- [Safe Work Procedures – Pile Burning](#)
- [Supervisor Resources](#)
- [Stand Tender Training and Assessment](#)
- [Woodlot and Small Tenure Safety Resources](#)

Let's learn from previous wildfire seasons and work together to ensure a safe and healthy summer for all by taking action and being proactive in reducing the risks of wildfires. We all play a part in protecting our communities and the environment. It is up to us to take responsibility for our actions and take the necessary steps to prevent and mitigate wildfires. 🌲



What's New

Here is the latest on what we have to offer since March 2023. Find direct links to safety alerts, industry-specific resources, industry information and more to download and/or share with employees, industry and safety peers. And make sure to follow us on social media to stay up-to-date with the latest news. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

New Online Training - Introduction to Dangerous Trees on Forestry Worksites

– Dangerous trees in forestry operations such as harvesting, silviculture and firefighting are high-risk hazards. If you work around dangerous trees - take this FREE course to help you understand the risks.

New Video: ERP Equipment Rollover and Operator Extraction – This video focuses on the importance of including extractions in Emergency Response Plans. It features a logging crew conducting an emergency extraction drill. It demonstrates the process and tools used for a crew-initiated extraction as well as a self-extraction done by the operator inside an over-turned cab.

Operator Safety Training Fact Sheet

– The Wood Pellets Association of Canada (WPAC) and BCFSC have launched an industry-wide initiative that delivers a comprehensive digital e-learning safety training program for plant operators and supervisors across companies. Learn more by reading the Fact Sheet.

BCFSC FIRS App – Forest Industry Reporting System is a FREE resource available to all BCFSC Members. [Register for access.](#)

WorkSafeBC Consultation Requests:

WorkSafeBC's Policy, Regulation and Research Department is requesting feedback on proposed amendments to:

Part 5, Chemical Agents and Biological Agents, sections 5.97 to 5.105, of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. Feedback deadline is 4:30pm | Monday, June 19, 2023.

Part 6, Substance Specific Requirements, sections 6.133 to 6.167 – Combustible Dusts, of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. Feedback submissions should be made by 4:30pm on Thursday, June 8, 2023.

Safety Alerts – Alerts provide timely information on incidents and issues which cause, or result in, serious or fatal injuries. The alerts we send by email and post on our website are intended to raise awareness and

educate industry so we can learn from each other's experience and effort. Here are the latest alerts from BCFSC and industry.

- **BCFSC Safety Alert of the Month** – Next Level Safety
- **Industry Alert** – Work Safely Around Powerlines
- **Manufacturing Weekly Safety Alert** – Click on the link to see the latest weekly alert

To subscribe to our safety alert emails – [Click Here](#)

Industry Links

BC Wildfire Service – visit BC Wildfire Service website to view the locations and details of all active wildfires in BC and information on fire bans and restrictions across BC.

Road Safety at Work – visit Road Safety at Work for resources, webinars, workshops and news relating to road safety for you and your employees.

WorkSafeBC Announcements – check here for the latest information on WorkSafeBC policy and regulation updates, resource development, risk advisories and more.

WorkSafeBC Enews – subscribe to Insight; WorkSafeBC's policy, regulation and research division e-Newsletter, Health and Safety Enews, Young Worker Enews and more.

WorkSafe Magazine – WorkSafeBC publishes *WorkSafe Magazine* six times a year to inform, inspire and provide practical tips on a range of topical occupational health and safety matters. It's free to [subscribe](#) and available online. 📖



Ill-fitting PPE for Women Creates Safety Hazards, Leaves Workers Feeling Excluded

Article Source: [OHS Canada](#), By [Todd Humber](#) (April 23, 2023)

There is one simple way to understand the issues facing women when it comes to finding properly fitting personal protective equipment (PPE), according to Lora McMillan, director of special projects at Ledcor Construction.

"I feel that maybe a lot of men haven't tried on women's clothing," she said. "Not to knock it or judge it — and maybe there's people that have — but I'd encourage you to go put on clothing that maybe doesn't fit with the gender you identify."

That's something women have been doing for a long time in the workplace when it comes to PPE, said McMillan. In her industry, construction, only about four per cent of site roles are occupied by women, which means the issue hasn't necessarily received the attention it deserved in the past.

"That's not a lot of people saying, 'Hey, this is not fitting me.' Sometimes, depending on the person, they may just feel 'Okay, well, I can deal with this,'" she said. "Maybe we just need to be louder, a little bit more obvious about saying this does not fit me and these are the reasons why."

McMillan was part of panel discussions during OHS Canada's PPE for Women event, which attracted nearly 900 professionals from across the country. The first panel broke down and identified some of the problems with poorly designed and ill-fitting gear in the workplace.

Issues in policing

Nicole Wetsch, manager of the occupational health and safety section for the Edmonton Police Service, said nearly all the equipment officers use is designed for men.

The most important item — body armour — has been around since the 1970s, but it's only in the last decade that manufacturers started developing body armour specifically for women.

"And that was geared towards the military," said Wetsch. "What that translates to for our female members is a

lot of ergonomic injury. It's not uncommon to see consistent bruising that doesn't go away for them... because they're wearing it 12 hours a day."

Women tend to have wider hips, but most body armour panels are cut in a rectangle shape.

"When they sit in their vehicle, that's digging in to their hips," she said.

Body armour can also be less effective for women because of their breasts, said Wetsch.

"If they happen to be someone with larger breasts, it creates a gap behind the panel," she said, meaning it can be penetrated in some cases in a way that wouldn't happen for men.

The shape of women's bodies can also change, through things like childbirth and menopause, which also alters how equipment fits, said Wetsch. "We have to look at different replacement schedules for our female members."

Issues in oil and gas

Karen Mosca, senior manager of operations at Pembina Pipeline Corporation, highlighted the issue of poorly fitting coveralls for women on job sites.

"The PPE, my coveralls, were hanging down to — I don't know what better word to use — but the crotch is hanging down to my knees," she said. "It just kind of restricts how you can move, and it is quite dangerous. Like, going upstairs, you can get caught on it."

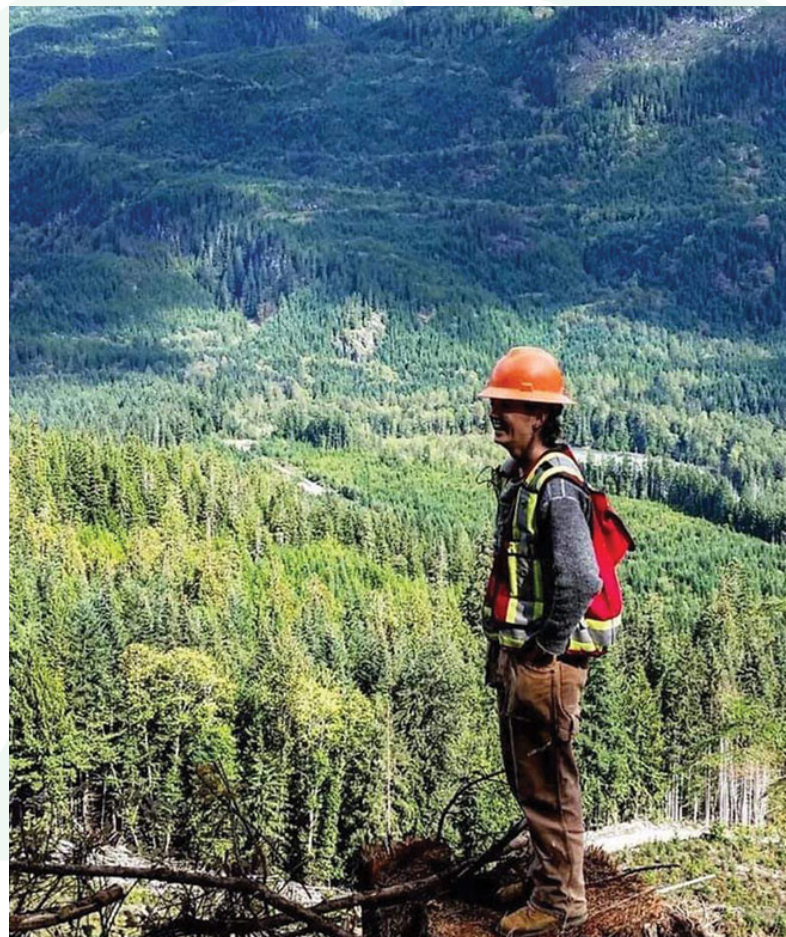
During her first site visit, she had to use electrical tape to wrap the coveralls around her ankles just so she wouldn't trip.

"With our chest and hips, we tend to have to go larger men's sizes. And by doing that, it just throws other parts of the coveralls off," said Mosca. "You have to almost pick — so they're either too loose or they're too tight."

Paula Campkin of Energy Safety Canada, who moderated the first panel discussion, noted that nearly any woman on a worksite could relate to the unique issues of cumbersome safety gear and using a washroom.

"A teeny, tiny porta potty and minus 30C and having to take off our coveralls, and it's definitely a very uncomfortable thing to have to do," said Campkin.

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Campkin also fielded a comment from an attendee and noted that women will often avoid going to the bathroom because of the hassle — which can lead to urinary tract infections — and have even more problems than usual when menstruating.

“It just leads to all kinds of questions, and the clothes that you’re wearing makes such a big impact to those types of issues,” said Campkin.

The bathroom issues resonated with Mosca. “I’ve done that so many times, where I’m tying the arms around my waist just so they don’t touch the floor in the bathroom,” she said.

Fall protection was also an area of concern for her because the harnesses often don’t fit women properly.

“If you were to actually fall, you could injure your pelvic area because they’re loose (and) they’re trying their best to make it fit,” said Mosca. “The list goes on and on.”

Off the rack items

The panelists spent some time discussing the issues of off-the-rack items for visitors, and even for women who wear something slightly different on a certain day under their gear.

At the Edmonton Police Service, Wetsch said members are issued body armour personally — but they have stock equipment for people who are doing things like ride-a-longs with officers that doesn’t always fit properly.

Even something as minor as wearing a different bra can alter the fit of PPE for women, she said.

Mosca said they try and keep all shapes and sizes of PPE in stock, but some particular sizes — like smaller gloves — tend to run out quicker or don’t get restocked.

“When the ladies have to go in, they can’t find them,” she said. “It just becomes more of a hassle than it likely is for the more traditional sizes.”

Real-world implications

Mosca shared the story of what she called a “high potential near miss” that happened to a worker she knows at a different company.

The woman, a welder, was wearing big and baggy coveralls.

“One day, when she was buffing off welds, the grinder kicked back and the buffing wheel got caught up in her loose clothing,” she said. The wheel quickly wrapped tightly into the loose fabric.

“Luckily, it only knocked the wind out of her and she did not get seriously injured,” said Mosca. After that incident she opted for tighter, albeit more uncomfortable, overalls.

That choice, between selecting gear that is effective and gear that is comfortable and possible to work in, is the crux of the issue.

“The thing that makes me most uncomfortable with loose clothing is rotating equipment,” said Mosca. “If she was to get caught into that, it’s not going to let her go.”

Feeling included

McMillan said it’s not just the gear that needs to be addressed — but also the attitudes — to create an environment where all workers feel welcome and included.

Not having the right gear, or feeling like an afterthought in the workplace, can affect the way people do their jobs and how they feel they’re being perceived, she said.

“Almost everywhere you turn, say the washroom, say the personal protective equipment, (sends a message that) you’re kind of just not considered in the industry,” said McMillan. “I think that’s part of what keeps such a low representation of women.”

When you don’t see yourself reflected in the industry — or even nomenclature like “man hoist” and “manpower” — it’s tiny, constant reminders that you’re not a priority, she said.

“Everybody’s talking about the pink tax, and everybody’s talking about the increasing costs, but it’s not really about that, right?”

Instead, it should be viewed as “maybe a little bit of an extra cost for safety” that has the potential to improve the industry, said McMillan.

Visibility and leadership

Wetsch said visibility is critical for women, adding that eight or nine years ago all the safety professionals at the Edmonton Police Service were men. As a result, the issues facing women weren’t being brought up.

“Over time, just with natural attrition, we’ve switched to a more female-centred team,” she said. “We’ve, in that timeframe, also had more females rise into leadership positions with the organization. And these conversations are happening a lot more and the people experiencing the issues feel a lot more comfortable bringing it forward, because they see that representation.”

Mosca noted that not every woman in your workplace will feel comfortable speaking up about the issue. When she started in the industry, and went out to job sites, she was more focused on keeping her head up and making sure she didn’t look intimidated.

Professionals in leadership positions need to be allies to young workers, and other women not comfortable speaking up, and be their voice.

“Then maybe, slowly, they’ll build their own voice,” she said. “And then they can do that for the next generation. So it’s just kind of organic change — like it’s happening — but it’s sometimes not happening quick enough.”

On-Demand Session Links

All of the sessions from the PPE for Women event *Don’t ‘Shrink It and Pink It’ – Real Solutions to Keep All Workers Safe* are [available to watch on demand](#).

Keynote Speaker | Jennifer Teague, CSA Group

CSA Group Report

Identifying the PPE Issues Facing Women and Understanding Consequences

Practical PPE Solutions for Women. 📺

Essential PPE For Forestry Workers

The importance of using the proper PPE & protective clothing in the forestry industry cannot be overstated. Forestry is a high-risk working environment and in terms of the hierarchy of controls, PPE is the last line of defence in the event of an incident after first eliminating, substituting and controlling risk. Various worksites, phase progression, the nature of the roles and environmental factors are only a handful of situations that involve jobs and tasks that can put people at risk of serious injury. If the right PPE is used, it can prevent or greatly reduce the risk of serious injury.

The PPE requirements for forestry workers vary based on the job activity of individual workers. And although there is a minimum requirement for PPE, special job activities may also require the use of additional required PPE such as flotation devices for those working on or near water, respiratory protection where workers are exposed to air contaminants, harnesses for working at elevation and specialised chainsaw pants for those operating chainsaws or other dangerous cutting and sawing equipment.

Employers, supervisors and workers all have responsibilities relating to PPE while on the job. To make sure this equipment protects workers as it should, it is important to know the responsibilities for PPE under the OHS Regulation and related materials.

There are several types of PPE that are vital for forestry workers and due to the high-risk nature of the work, all PPE equipment must meet the required safety standards. Approved PPE is dependant on your role and the task at hand. Check with your company or a WorkSafeBC Prevention Officer to



ensure you and your crew are wearing the proper gear. The key areas for protection include:

- **Head Protection** – should be fitted securely and highly visible in colour
- **Eye and Face Protection** - must be worn when there is a risk of eye or face injuries.
- **Hearing Protection** - is required for when working with or near high noise machinery and is now the highest classification level of PPE because of the risks involved.
- **Hand Protection** - workers must wear gloves when handling sharp objects and materials and operating dangerous machinery.
- **Leg Protection** – must be worn when operating a chainsaw. It must also cover the entire leg, from the upper thigh down to the top of the user's boot.

- **Foot protection** - needs to be waterproof or water resistant, with ankle support and toe protection. Employees using chainsaws must wear boots with cut resistant material.
- **Hi-Vis (High-visibility) Clothing** – reflective clothing such as vests, jackets, shirts, etc. in a highly visible fluorescent colour helps reduce the risk of being hit by vehicles or machinery.

To learn more about Personal Protective Equipment, visit the [BCFSC PPE webpage](#) or contact [WorkSafeBC](#) to find out the PPE requirements you need to keep you safe in your job. 🚧



BCFSC and Artificial Intelligence

By Richard King, Director of Programs and Training

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is everywhere right now, even in forestry. In this article I will outline how BCFSC is incorporating this technology into our work.

People have been using AI (sometimes unknowingly) for many years, from improving our web searches in Google to providing recommendations on Netflix based on what we've watched. Recent advancements in this technology have created new opportunities, but it has also come with plenty of controversy!

Many companies are incorporating AI into their business practices to provide new services and better products. If you use the internet for news and entertainment there is a high chance some of the articles you read were written entirely or almost entirely using an AI tool. Additionally, there are also tools for creating images that are almost indistinguishable from photos. The current AI tools available are just the tip of the iceberg and we will likely see many more as we explore the capabilities of the technology.

At a broad level, Artificial Intelligence is the use of computers systems to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. It includes the ability of machines to perceive, synthesize, and learn from information. The most recent topic of discussion worldwide is a tool called "generative AI", where users can input a variety of commands and produce new content based on information the AI tool has "learned" or been trained to produce. These tools get better with more input and can further refine content produced with additional user input. Recently, these tools have progressed in such a way that they interact with the user in ways similar to interacting with another human being.

However, the ability for anyone to use the technology and be able to produce high-quality AI-generated content very quickly has raised a lot of questions about job losses, intellectual property rights, and information security. While this article isn't going to delve into detail about these concerns, BCFSC has been paying attention and is currently developing strategies for dealing with this type of technology. Although we don't have all the

answers, we felt it was important to address where we are headed.

In case you were wondering, this article was not written with the direct help of AI.

There are limits to AI tools. [OpenAI](#) states on their ChatGPT application that the tool may provide incorrect information, produce harmful instructions, show bias, and will have limited knowledge of events after a certain point (based on the date the AI-generated information was created). These limitations are part of the reason why BCFSC is making purposeful decisions around using AI tools.

We produce a lot of high-quality information to support forestry companies in developing their safety programs and training. We produce this newsletter, detailed industry reports, monthly safety alerts, hundreds of pages of training, comprehensive resource packages, and crew talk sheets. All of this information is developed with the support of many industry partners and a small internal team. We always strive to make this information more impactful for industry and easier to produce while ensuring we maintain our commitment to quality by using technology safely and effectively. This commitment applies not only to AI, but also social media, online training tools, and other technologies that have both significant opportunities and potential to cause harm.

As we continue to navigate the AI waters and learn how we can use these tools accurately and appropriately, BCFSC is currently using AI in the following ways:

- BCFSC will not publish anything, AI produced or otherwise, that hasn't been reviewed by real-life subject matter experts, either internally or through our industry partners. We believe input from those closest to the work (workers, supervisors and employers) is critical to producing the most effective resources and training.
- **Images and video:** At this point we won't be using AI to create critical imagery or video for our publications or training. We often struggle to get good photos and video of BC forestry workers, but we feel it is vital to show how the work is done

by industry members and will continue to source "real" images for this purpose. However, some of our materials are purchased from stock image companies and we may use AI-generated images for non-critical media from these sources—for example, images of scenery, books, computers, etc.

- **Research:** We may use AI to support research on topics and to provide outlines for some of our writing. An example of this is when people use Wikipedia to get an overall sense of a topic as a kickoff point for a deeper dive into a topic that may include subject matter expert input, trade publications, news articles and academic publications.
- **Editing:** We may use AI to provide editing support (i.e., spelling and grammar checks) for written drafts. Microsoft is currently introducing AI into its Office applications which means some of AI-generated content may be incorporated into our work processes without express action taken by us.
- **Training:** We may use AI to support our training in several ways. We may use AI to assist in developing quizzes, summaries, case studies, and other student activities. We are also exploring using AI tools to make online training more interactive and supportive of the user learning experience.

As we get used to this new and evolving technology, our approach will be adjusted over time. At this point, we are taking a cautious approach to ensure we are providing industry with current and practical resources by taking advantage of technological advances, while at the same time ensuring our information is accurate, safe, and representative of our industry.

Earlier in this article, I noted that it wasn't written with the help of generative AI. However, I did want to test it out and I asked an AI to write a haiku for the BC forest industry. Here is the result:

*Trees reaching skyward,
Industry from forest born,
British Columbia's pride.*

References:

- [Ask a Techspert Blog](#)
- [Wikipedia: Artificial Intelligence](#)
- [OpenAI](#)
- [BC Forest Safety Council](#) 

BC Employer Training Grant program

The Province of British Columbia has recently released a grant for BC Employers to help train new and existing employees. The BC Employer Training Grant program is intended to help build a stronger economy by focusing on a skilled workforce, essential for strong, sustainable and balanced growth. According to the WorkBC webpage, building an agile and resilient workforce—one with the right mix of skills to respond to the evolving demands of the labour market—provides BC enterprises with a strategic competitive advantage for productivity and innovation. Skills development increases participation in the labour market and provides a key to adapting to the changing world of work.

Receive up to \$300,000 for Skills Training

The BC Employer Training Grant provides funding to small, medium and large enterprises to support skills training for their workforces, including prospective new hires as well as upgraded training for existing employees.

The intent of this program is to help British Columbians access the skills training required to adapt to the labour market's changing job requirements, while also encouraging employer involvement in skills training.

The Employer Training Grant helps employers pay for training, which in turn helps employees experience increased job security or move into better jobs.

Employers can apply as often as they need and receive 80% of the cost of training up to \$10,000 per employee, with a maximum annual amount per employer of \$300,000 per fiscal year.

Learn more about the [BC Employer Training Grant program](#).

Some additional details on this program include:

Additional Details:

- Training must result in increased job security or a better job* for a current employee** once training is completed, or a job for an unemployed person.
- The Province will reimburse employers 80% of eligible training costs. The employer must contribute the remaining 20%.
- Employers are eligible to receive up to \$10,000 per participant and up to \$300,000 per fiscal year (April 1 – March 31).
- At the time of application, participants must be unemployed, or employed by the applicant employer.**
- Employers must submit their application on their own behalf, using their Business BCeID. Third parties cannot apply on an employer's behalf.
- Participants must submit their own Participant Information Forms before an application can be submitted. Employers cannot submit these on an employee's behalf.
- If approved, employers (not participants) are to pay for all costs in full and, after training has started, submit a reimbursement claim within 30 days.
- Employee participants must be Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or protected persons under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada). Temporary foreign workers, international students, or other temporary residents are ineligible.
- Training cannot be longer than 52 weeks in length. Note that the ETG does not fund diploma or degree programs, in full or in part.

*A "better job" is defined as:

- Increased pay
- Promotion or advancement to another position
- Move from part-time to full-time employment
- Move from temporary/casual/seasonal employment to permanent employment

NOTE: For employers looking to hire workers that have been directly or indirectly impacted by a downturn in the forest sector, the ETG may support training for participants employed by another employer at the time of application. 🌲

Understanding and Reporting Serious Injuries

The [Workers Compensation Act](#) regulates that WorkSafeBC must be notified in the case of a worker's death or a serious injury as well as immediate notification of a major failure or collapse of a structure, equipment, construction support system or excavation, a major release of a hazardous material or other serious mishaps, such as multiple employees requiring first aid treatment.

WorkSafeBC defines a Serious Injury as:

Any injury that can reasonably be expected at the time of the incident to endanger life or cause permanent injury. Serious injuries include both traumatic injuries that are life threatening or that result in a loss of consciousness, and incidents such as chemical exposures, heat stress and cold stress which are likely to result in a life-threatening condition or cause permanent injury or significant physical impairment.

Injuries that require a critical intervention such as CPR, artificial ventilation or control of hemorrhaging or treatment beyond First Aid, such as the intervention of Emergency Health Services personnel (e.g. transportation to further medical attention), a physician and subsequent surgery or admittance to an intensive care unit are also considered "serious injuries."

[WorkSafeBC](#) requires that all serious incidents and accidents be immediately reported and investigated to ensure a WorkSafeBC prevention officer can respond in order to:

- Attend at the scene to conduct an investigation of the incident and ensure the integrity of the scene
- Offer availability of counseling services, as appropriate
- Undertake an inspection of the workplace to help ensure that workers are protected before work is resumed
- Help ensure that any post-incident response or cleanup is performed in a safe manner
- Provide a referral to compensation services

To help you and your crew understand what a serious injury means and how to report it, BCFSC has developed a Serious Injury Fact Sheet that provides the WorkSafeBC definition of a Serious Injury and what to do in case an incident occurs. Download a copy of the [Serious Injury Fact Sheet](#) from the BCSFC website. 🌲

Upcoming Consultations on proposed amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation


Part 5 – Chemical Agents and Biological Agents

WorkSafeBC's Policy, Regulation and Research Department is requesting feedback on proposed amendments to Part 5, Chemical Agents and Biological Agents, sections 5.97 to 5.105, of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. The amendments are related to emergency planning.

The consultation phase gives stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback before the proposed amendments are taken to public hearing. All stakeholder feedback is carefully considered and analyzed and provided to WorkSafeBC's Board of Directors as part of their decision-making process.

Proposed regulatory amendments under review:

- **Part 5, Chemical Agents and Biological Agents, sections 5.97 to 5.105**

Feedback will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on June 19, 2023 and can be provided online, or by email or mail. To view the [proposed regulatory amendments](#) and information on how to provide feedback, visit the [WorkSafeBC webpage](#). 

WorkSafeBC launches updated blasting certification guide for workers handling explosives

Manual reflects B.C.'s new Occupational Health and Safety Regulations for blasters.

Blasting and explosives are important resources in British Columbia's forestry sector, but they can also pose serious risks to workers' health and safety.

In December 2021, [new occupational health and safety regulations](#) went into effect for blasting operations in B.C. As a result of these changes, WorkSafeBC has released a new Blasters' Handbook that follows the latest industry standards. You can access this valuable resource right now on [worksafebc.com](#).

The updated manual is designed to serve as a study guide for workers who wish to be examined for a WorkSafeBC blasting certificate; it can also be used as a reference for those already working in the industry.

"Since the first handbook was originally released in the 1980s, there have been many changes in blasting technology, as well as in related laws and regulations," says Sonja Kristinsson, Blasting Certification Officer at WorkSafeBC, and lead for the handbook update project.

Forestry sector and explosives

Workers in the forestry sector may use explosives for a variety of reasons, including road construction, to clear paths for pipelines or powerlines, and to control or prevent forest fires. Explosives can also be used to remove danger trees and fall

trees in areas that are difficult to access or to remove obstacles such as rocks or stumps.

However, the use of explosives in forestry operations comes with inherent risks and must be done in accordance with strict safety regulations and guidelines. To help reduce injuries, employers should take time to identify the risks present in their operations, evaluate the risks they present, and implement appropriate measures to mitigate or eliminate them. In the last several years, the top three injury claims among blasters and drillers were related to exertion, including strains and sprains, falls, and contact with objects.

What's New?

The updated handbook was a collaborative effort with industry leaders including engineers, explosives manufacturers, employers, government agencies and business associations from across North America. It provides enhanced definitions, requirements, and guidelines for B.C. workers and employers who manage explosives.

WorkSafeBC also added three new chapters to the handbook — including one dedicated to health and safety.

Specific changes include the following:

- Chapter 1 (New): General health and safety requirements - This chapter outlines the responsibilities of both employers and workers in blasting operations.

British Columbia Blasters' Handbook



- Chapter 2 (New): Common injuries and health and safety hazards - This chapter provides information on the most common claims in blasting and drilling, as well as the various types of musculoskeletal injuries that can occur.
- Chapter 10: Blast design - This chapter covers the planning and factors that need to be considered to ensure a safe and effective outcome during a blast.
- Chapter 21: Electronic initiation systems - This chapter offers details on the features, benefits, and risks associated with electronic systems.
- Chapter 22: Remote firing systems - This chapter provides education on remote firing systems and the necessary testing requirements.
- Chapter 23 (New): Avalanche control - This chapter offers guidance on avalanche control techniques and the required safety protocols.

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The latest edition of the handbook features learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter to provide readers with an overview of the knowledge they can gain. Additionally, the appendixes have been updated to include essential information on blast design patterns, trench patterns, blast design calculations, and other relevant topics.

The handbook development team placed equal emphasis on ensuring the handbook's content is accessible and easy to understand. Therefore, the content was written in plain language to help anyone working with explosives comprehend the potential risks, health and safety requirements, and regulations associated with this type of work.

WorkSafeBC My Health & Safety Resources

WorkSafeBC has a [new health and safety resource tool](#) to help identify potential risks and hazards in your workplace.

This tool provides a starting point for identifying basic health and safety requirements in your industry/workplace and generates a report that will provide tailored step-by-step guidance on how to create a healthy and safe workplace specific to your needs.


How Does it Work?

The tool guides you through a series of questions and topics to help you identify hazards and risks that may exist in your workplace. Once completed, you'll receive a report that contains a curated list of:

- Specific requirements for your workplace and those that apply to all workplaces in BC
- Links to relevant sections of the Workers Compensation Act and Occupational Health and Safety Regulation
- Health and safety topics you selected, with links to resources for more information

You can choose to download your report as either an Acrobat PDF or an Excel workbook which will include links to the specific requirements, legislative information and health and safety topics specific to your workplace.

Give it a try and get a tailored health and safety workbook for your workplace.


[WorkSafeBC: My health & safety resources](#) 

Blasting Certification

The Blasting Certification is a requirement for those who want to conduct an industrial blasting operation (other than in a mine) in British Columbia. The revised Blasters' Handbook now aligns with the content in the certification exam, making it easier for those seeking to obtain or renew their certificate.

New blasting certifications are valid for two years, while renewal blasting certifications are valid for up to five years. When a certificate expires, the blaster must write and pass another blasting exam to be recertified.

WorkSafeBC is currently working to revamp the blasting certification exam itself, creating different exams for the diverse types of blasting work. For instance, forestry blasters will soon have a more industry-specific exam. WorkSafeBC is also exploring ways to improve the exam process and including new questions on current blasting tools and techniques, such as electronic systems.

"The revised Blasters' Handbook is an excellent resource for those working in the industry, including blasting company employers, owners, and operators. It contains up-to-date information on industry safety standards, making it a great tool for exam preparation or onboarding new workers to your crew," says Kristinsson. 

2023's Interior Safety Conference

The Interior Safety Conference (ISC) is an annual event that brings together professionals from the BC forest sector to discuss safety-related issues and explore ways to improve safety practices in the industry. This year's conference took place on May 4th at the Coast Kamloops Conference Centre, and was a great success.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who joined us at the ISC 2023. We were thrilled to see such a large turnout, and we appreciate the time and effort you took to attend the conference. Your participation made this event a huge success.

The ISC is held in partnership with the Interior Logging Association (ILA) Conference, and we would like to thank the ILA for their support. We would also like to extend our gratitude to our industry sponsors, WorkSafeBC, BCFSC, Canfor, Interfor, Weyerhaeuser, West Fraser, Gorman, and Tolko. Thanks to their generous support, we were able to offer the event free of charge to all attendees.

This year's theme, "Lead From Where You Are," focused on empowering individuals to take ownership of safety in the workplace. We were fortunate to have an excellent lineup of keynote speakers, including former NHL goaltender and mental health advocate, Corey Hirsch, mental health expert, Amenda Kumar from WorkSafeBC, and "the Brain Guy" Terry Small. Their insights and expertise added tremendous value to the conference.

In addition, we were pleased to have presentations from SkinnyChicken Enterprises Ltd. on Phase Congestion as well as BCFSC's Transportation and Northern Safety Director Dustin Meierhofer together with LOTS Group Canada's, Greg Munden with their panel discussion on the opportunities and challenges the forest sector faces on recruitment and training efforts. Their contributions highlighted the importance of safety in the forestry industry and emphasized our shared vision of ensuring that every forestry worker goes home safe, every day.

Looking ahead, we invite those located on or near the coast, to mark their calendars for the 2023 Vancouver Island Safety Conference, which takes place on Saturday, October 28, 2023, at the Vancouver Island Conference Centre in Nanaimo, BC. We hope to see you there.

Once again, we would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone who made the ISC 2023 possible. Your dedication to safety in the forestry industry is truly inspiring, and we look forward to continuing this important conversation in the years to come. 