



Making safety part of good community relationships

One of the best features of BC woodlots and community forest areas is their ability to give the public opportunities to see and interact with local small-scale forest management. Indeed, the stated purposes of most such tenures include contributing to the achievement of a range of objectives, values and priorities held by the community, and flowing to the people who live there.

What that looks like *on-the-ground* depends on the tenure, the licence holder and the community. The list can be lengthy: firewood cutting, mountain biking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, access to fishing, hunting and gathering opportunities, and more. Most often, those activities occur right on the licence area. But sometimes, building and maintaining good relationships with neighbours includes activities that occur outside the licence area.

In all cases, safety is a top priority that licence holders should keep in mind. When those activities occur on the tenure area, the licence holder has, at a minimum, safety accountabilities as the site [owner](#). Even when legal duties are ambiguous, upholding community interests includes the social responsibility to do what you can to minimize the risk of anyone getting hurt.

Consider firewood cutting. Given the number of firewood cutters you see on your licence area and the wide variety of *skills* and approaches they have, you might be thinking that it is only a matter of time before something bad happens. It's probably impossible to stop firewood cutters from going into your tenure area, so that's not a viable way of preventing those incidents. You probably don't want to try to "police" them, partially because doing so incurs other legal duties. But the due diligence voice in your head still tells you that there's something you can do to reduce the likelihood of anyone getting hurt.

Maybe you can implement a *permit* process that obliges the holder to have proper gear and training. Or maybe in the long run, it's cheaper, easier and safer to just buck up a bunch of firewood and deliver it to a central location. That way, you are the only one handling a chain

saw or processor, you'll save road maintenance dollars and reduce fire risks. Plus, your house log deck remains intact.

Perhaps you want to give back to your community by helping a local teen gain exposure to career opportunities in forestry. Whether its building trails, planting seedlings or running a piece of equipment, even if they are not your employee, you don't want that teen to be hurt before they start their career. So, you take the time to explain and show them how its done - properly. You tell them about hazards they might encounter, and how to avoid or overcome them. When you think they're ready, you have them give it a try. Before you turn them loose, both of you are confident they can do the job without risk of incident. And even though you might not technically be their *supervisor* you stick around and watch them, just in case.

Whether its legally hard-wired safety responsibilities, a matter of due diligence or just your own desire to make sure none of your neighbours suffers an injury, building and maintaining good community relationships includes proactively thinking about what could possibly go wrong, considering the spectrum of ways to reduce risks and choosing actions that lead to safe outcomes.

Additional resources

[Know Your Responsibilities - Owner](#)

[Know Your Responsibilities – Board of Directors](#)

[Know Your Responsibilities - Summary](#)