SAFEWOODS

Woodlot Licence & Community Forest Agreement Safety Committee

Rainfall Shutdown and Resumption Procedures

Forest tenure holders/Licensees must provide and maintain their land and premises used as a workplace in a manner that ensures the health and safety of workers. This includes direct employees as well as contractors who are working on their behalf.

One of the obligations is to ensure that there is effective rainfall shutdown and resumption procedures in place, not only on active work sites but also on the travel routes to and from these sites. This is particularly important given recent rain fall triggered landslide events within BC which have resulted in workers being injured or killed. These events are getting more common place, leading to increased importance for having these procedures in place.

Rainfall shutdown procedures are comprised of three parts:

1) Identification of areas of high risk to landslide. These are typically areas containing steep slopes where high rainfall events or rain on snow events could result in a landslide and put workers at risk. Knowing where these areas are relative to the work site as well as the direct routes traveled to and from work is critical.

2) Identification of when a locally significant rainfall event has occurred or is happening. This requires:
    a. Representative local weather stations or rain gauges which identify rainfall accumulation hourly and over the past 24 to 48 hours.
    b. On site rain gauges to measure rainfall either over night or during the day.
    c. Worker awareness of what conditions are normal and what might represent abnormal or extreme conditions (i.e., very swollen rivers and streams).

3) Process for either calling workers off when it is unsafe to go to work or having them determine that current conditions are making it unsafe to remain at work. Having workers driving into an unsafe situation is as bad as having them remain on site when conditions are getting more hazardous.

Whether the procedures are in the hands of the licensee or the contractors working on their behalf, it is critical that areas that are high risk are identified and that there is a procedure in place to address the potential hazard.

The final component is having effective resumption procedures in place. Determining when it is safe to return to the work site can be as simple as waiting 24 hours post rain event or as involved as calculating when the soil water balance is appropriate. In addition, a best practice is to have a competent individual review the access and work site prior to crews returning to ensure their safety.

Links:

Forest Stewardship - Province of British Columbia (gov.bc.ca) (Search: Wet Weather)