

FATALITY ALERT

– PRELIMINARY INFORMATION –

BCFSC #2023-09-19

On September 19th at approximately 2:00 am, four wildland firefighters were fatally injured on Highway 1 near Walhachin. RCMP investigators indicated the fire crew's pick-up truck failed to navigate a bend in the road, crossed the centre line and collided with a semi-truck head-on.

We extend our condolences to the family and friends of the deceased and our sympathies to all those affected by this incident.

This incident is under investigation and details are still to be determined; so contributing factors to the incident are not available.

Consider the following points for safe driving:

1. Driving to and from work is often the most hazardous part of the workday. The risks may be overlooked however, because driving is so commonplace. Make sure safety programs include driving procedures, ongoing training, mechanical inspections, and regular assessment of drivers.
2. Fatigue is a hazardous condition for all forestry workers. Fatigue is caused by a variety of reasons including lack of sleep or rest, hard physical or mental work, and even poor nutrition. Fatigue can also be cumulative, meaning long shifts, multiple nights of poor sleeps, or continuous mental or physical work increase the risk of mistakes caused by fatigue.
3. Circadian rhythms are the physical, mental, and behavioural cycles the body experiences in a 24-hour period. When we work late at night, we are mentally more sluggish as our bodies expect us to be asleep during this time. When working late or during a night shift, take extra steps to address systems of fatigue and remain safe.
4. Vigilance is an important part of good safety programs. Workers may relax and let their guard down when the workday is done. Foster an attitude of vigilance, so everyone continues watching for hazardous situations even when the main work tasks are completed and/or the workday is done.
5. Defensive driver training is critical when workers drive as part of their job. Valuable techniques such as emergency braking and steering should be taught and practiced. Regular training reinforces hazards involved with driving and prevents drivers from becoming complacent.
6. Be a professional passenger. Don't distract the driver. Practice good habits by acting as an additional set of eyes and helping the driver spot hazards. This is especially helpful on busy highways, resource roads and long trips.
7. The critical incident stress after a major incident or injury can be significant. Watch out for co-workers, family members and others in the community as they may be struggling. Critical incident debriefing or counselling should be available for all those affected. Recovering mentally after a serious incident can be a long process. Looking out for those affected can help prevent an additional tragedy.

Supporting Resources:

[Fatigue Management – BC Forest Safety Council](#)

[Road Safety at Work - Occupational Road Safety Resources](#)