



SAFETY ALERT & BULLETIN OF THE MONTH

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Use All Your Senses

AOM: 2023-12-07

It takes a lot of knowledge, skills and abilities to spot hazards and stay safe at work. This includes using all our senses. Workers can improve their safety when they pause and focus on what their senses are telling them about the worksite and hazards around them.

Tips on Using All Your Senses:

See:

- The most common way of identifying hazards is visually recognizing them. This skill can be improved with training and focused practice. For example, when new drivers start out, they may have difficulty visually detecting and tracking driving hazards. With time and training, they will learn what they need to pay attention to and how to become less distracted.
- Visual literacy is a term related to how well our brain and eyes see details around us. Understanding how light, geometry and colour affect what we see can help us better spot dangerous changes on a worksite.
- Some examples of visual changes that represent hazards include:
 - A shadowed section of road in winter may be colder and icier than rest of the road surface.
 - Spotting the line of a branch or tree stem that is at a different angle from the rest. This could be a broken branch or tree that is ready to fall.
 - A black spot on the horizon that doesn't match the colour of surrounding vegetation could be a black bear. If missed, the bear may not be detected until a field worker is too close.
- Blog post on visual literacy and safety: [Visual Literacy](#)





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Feel:

- Many forestry jobs require muscle memory and a good “feel” for the work. This muscle memory takes time to develop and can be lost with time away from work. A good example is walking through the forest efficiently and quickly, also known as getting your “bush legs”. You may be more prone to slips and trips if you’ve been away from work for a while.
- Pay attention to changes in temperature, which can often be gradual and easy to overlook. This can lead to problems such as hypothermia or overheating.

Hear:

- Hearing is a very sharp sense and useful for detecting subtle problems such as a quiet rattle or tick that could be the start of a mechanical issue. Protect your hearing with appropriate hearing protection when performing noisy work.
- WorkSafeBC Bulletin (PDF) on noise exposure: [How Loud Is It? Forestry](#)

Smell:

- Smell can help detect a small whiff of smoke during fire season or the smell of rotten eggs when working around sour gas sites. These things can be the first sign of a problem that can be fixed while the hazard remains minimal.
- WorkSafeBC resources on hydrogen sulfide (H₂S): [Hydrogen Sulfide \(H₂S\) Safety](#)

Bringing it all together:

- If you’re a supervisor, try to engage all the senses when teaching your crew something new. Don’t just rely on a verbal explanation for a new procedure, show images or video of what needs to be done, and have them try it for themselves. Hands on practice with coaching is very effective.
- We all have intuition or gut instincts that can give us a sense that something was overlooked or something feels wrong or dangerous - often before we consciously recognize it. Listen to your gut.





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BCFSC Latest News & Resources

[Online Training for Forest Supervisors](#) – There are six online Forest Supervisor training courses that are available for free. [Check out this website to learn more.](#)

[December 2023 - Forest Safety Newsletter](#) – Read the latest issue of the BCFSC FSN. Download a copy or read it online.

[Video: Successful Return to Work Strategies](#) – WorkSafeBC presents successful return to work strategies addressing collaboration between employers and employees and early rehabilitation.

[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.

[Updated FIRS App](#) - The second phase of the FIRS App is now ready and allows contractors to use FIRS to create, report and submit reports for injuries, near misses, hazards, harassment, property damage and wildlife encounters. Visit the FIRS webpage for more information.

BCFSC Training:

Upcoming Classroom Training

The 2024 training calendar is now available. Refer to the [Training section of our website](#) for more information on upcoming classroom training and costs.

Worker Assessment and Training

Each forestry occupation requires different knowledge and skillsets to perform the job at hand. BCFSC worked with industry to develop competency-based standards, training, and assessment tools to help employers evaluate workers and complete on-the-job training.

Check out our [FREE online training and assessment forms](#) for Basic Forest Workers, Yarding, Mechanized Harvesting and Road Building.

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