



## Looking Back to See What's Ahead

By David Adshead, BCFSC Falling Safety Advisor

Welcome to a new year. This year marks a few milestones in the forest industry's progress in improving worker safety. Looking back at significant catalysts for change, the steps taken along the path chart our progress and identify the next steps toward the goal of **every worker going home safe, every day.**

The following statement is an excerpt from a Workers' Compensation Board letter from 1926 voicing concern for the human toll the forest industry workers and their families were experiencing.

*"Almost everything depends upon the individual carefulness of the workmen himself and those working around him. Rules, regulations, safety devices and posted warnings are all useless unless every man is careful to see that they are enforced, unless every man is careful to watch for danger and careful to warn others of danger.*

*Preach safe practices and practice the doctrine of safety. It pays."*

Although the words are dated, the message is just as relevant today as it was nearly a century ago and the reality of working in the forest industry remains the same. "Worker safety is successful through the thoughts and actions of every individual worker". This quote comes from a letter attached to a 2004 report tabled by the Forest Safety Task Force, a panel of industry experts assembled with the mandate to address the unacceptable level of serious injuries and fatalities in the forest industry. Formed in July 2003, the Forest Safety Task Force identified several vital items that changed how the industry functions. I encourage you to take a look at the Task Force Report, including the 1926 letter on the [BCFSC website](#).

From the Forest Safety Task Force recommendations, 2004 saw the formation of the forest industry's very own health and safety association, the

BC Forest Safety Council (BCFSC), whose role was to bring the BC Forest Safety Accord to life. The organization, led by a council of industry stakeholders, began implementing many of the Task Force recommendations by administering the SAFE Companies program, the BC Faller Training Standard and Faller Certification. The BCFSC became the hub for forest industry training, education, communication, and support, guided by the needs of the industry. There was a heavy emphasis on faller safety as that job was and is still considered a very high-risk occupation and suffers the highest injury and fatality rates of all the forest industry occupations by a wide margin.

2012 saw the creation of a five-day BCFSC Faller Supervisor course and the further development of the Certified Faller Supervisor program to improve and standardize faller supervision. There are now 177 BCFSC Certified Faller Supervisors. In 2023, the Faller Supervisor course was updated to align with the current needs of industry and was piloted as a hybrid course. Incorporating a risk-based approach, the new course involves twelve hours of online learning to preload participants with the concepts before they attend four days of in person learning, consisting of two classroom and two field days.

From 2004 to 2014, 229 people completed the New Faller Training program administered by the BCFSC. During that time, a second administrator of the BC Faller Training Standard was approved to deliver training and certification of fallers for the oil and gas industry. 2015 to 2023 saw another 138 candidates complete the 30-day New Faller Training course. Interest in this course continues to grow year after year.

As a result of the [Deloitte Report](#) recommendations, work began in 2015 on updating and modularization of the BC Faller Training Standard. After years

of work by industry subject matter experts from the forest industry, oil and gas sector, and the BC Wildfire Service, a modularized competency-based New Faller Training course was piloted in 2018. The BCFSC continues to work with WorkSafeBC to have these updates approved, including the addition of safe work procedures identified by industry.

2021-2022 saw a shift in faller supervision to a risk-based approach. WorkSafeBC engaged with industry to produce a set of videos, including the powerful [Champions of Change](#), that highlight the importance of faller supervision and related challenges. BCFSC continues to provide advocacy to falling supervisors on risk-based supervision and develop resources to support the falling supervisors in their day-to-day responsibilities.

2024 will see continued efforts to support faller safety in the forest industry. BCFSC and the Falling Technical Advisory Committee will be working to produce info flips for falling supervisors that align with a risk-based approach to faller supervision. The info flips will provide guidance in roles and responsibilities of a supervisor, the safe operating procedures for managing fallers and helpful best practice tips aimed at supporting falling supervisors.

How do all these things make working in the forest safer?

In providing effective safe work procedures, training and information to forest industry workers, the goal is to make it easy for workers to do the right thing. Like the statement in the 1926 Workers' Compensation Board letter states, safety is only achieved through individual worker's thoughts and actions. Up to date procedures, effective training, and communication of information provides workers with the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions that enable them to work safely and effectively.

Making it easy for people to make the right decisions and go home safe every day, that is what success looks like! With that, I wish you all success in 2024 and beyond. 🍀

## Falling Safety Advisor Activities

2023 was a challenging year in the forest industry. At the beginning of the year, accumulated snowpacks across the province and in particular Vancouver Island, limited the amount of falling activity. Before we knew it, May was here and brought with it increased temperatures and drought-like conditions that limited industry's ability to work. Despite these challenges, BCFSC's Falling Safety Advisors were busy with industry engagement. Below are the activities as of December 31, 2023.

- 19 Faller Certifications
- 2 CFS Quality Assurance Visits
- 3 Falling Supervisor Certifications
- 179 Faller Visits
- 10 Trainer Quality Assurance Visits
- 14 Trainer & Trainee Quality Assurance Visits
- 10 Company Reviews 🎯

## Roger Harris Retires from FTAC and the BCFSC Ombudsperson Role

During the September meeting of FTAC, Roger Harris announced his retirement at the end of the year as the BCFSC Ombudsperson and dedicated FTAC member. FTAC members congratulated Roger on his retirement and shared their appreciation for how approachable and honest Roger had been over the years.

Roger addressed the group stating: "My fondest memories in life are the times I spent falling, without a shadow of a doubt. My proudest memories are the body of work that I have produced sitting in this position since 2006. Thank you for the opportunity to do all that." The Ombudsperson Annual Reports and Safety Review and Reports can be found on the BCFSC [website](#).

Some of Roger's best phrases over the years were "Put the cat in with the chickens" or rather stir things up and "Putting a button on Jello" with regards to the difficulty in a situation.

On behalf of FTAC and the BC Forest Safety Council, we wish Roger all the best in his future endeavours and welcome him back to a meeting anytime! 🎯



FTAC members surround Roger Harris at the September 15th meeting.

## Qualified Faller Trainer Course

BCFSC had the opportunity to hold a second Qualified Faller Trainer (QFT) in 2023. The course took place from December 11-16, 2023, in the Parksville area.

Five BCFSC Certified fallers took part in the six day course. The QFT course is designed to prepare BCFSC Certified fallers to instruct the 30-day New Faller Training course, following the BC Faller Training Standard.

BCFSC would like to thank Sam Stanko and Mosaic Forest Management for their ongoing support in providing timber for BCFSC training programs.

For more information on the QFT program, visit the BCFSC [website](#) to find out more. 🎯

