



Change Fatigue: Understanding and Managing a Quiet Crisis

In British Columbia's forest industry, contractors are facing a growing and often overlooked challenge: change fatigue. This emotional, mental and physical exhaustion builds up when individuals or teams are exposed to frequent, ongoing and often unpredictable changes. Though not always visible (the "quiet" part), the cumulative toll of climate events, policy shifts, market instability, staff shortages and evolving land use expectations, is quietly eroding resilience and capacity across the sector.

B.C.'s forests have always been shaped by natural cycles and economic forces. More recently, however, wildfires, prolonged droughts, tenure reallocations, shrinking timber supply and unpredictable duties and tariffs have intensified, reshaping how and when work gets done. These disruptions increasingly delay access to cut blocks, heighten safety risks and force tough decisions about scaling back or diversifying.

The Impact on Small Companies

For smaller operations, these pressures can hit harder. There is no HR department to manage the fallout, no legal team to interpret new agreements. It's just you, your crew and the pressure to adapt.

The relentless pace of change isn't just a professional challenge, it's deeply personal. When you're responsible for both the livelihood of your crew and the survival of your business, every disruption carries weight. Whether it's a delayed contract, a new regulatory requirement or another season of unpredictable weather, the cumulative stress can be overwhelming.

Change fatigue in this context often shows up for companies and their crews as:

- **Low morale and burnout** – not just among workers, but also in owners who feel the pressure to stay optimistic and keep things moving.
- **Disengagement and resistance** – especially if new policies or expectations arrive without clear support or consultation.
- **Isolation and cynicism** – as owners feel increasingly disconnected from decision-makers and uncertain about the future.

- **Safety compromises** – when under pressure, decisions may be rushed and safety protocols skipped.

How is change fatigue showing up in your operation? Have you considered what you may be able to do to mitigate this for yourself and/or your crew?

Strategies to Manage and Prevent Change Fatigue

While external pressures like market shifts, regulatory updates or environmental conditions may be beyond your control, focus on what is within your reach:

Reconnect with Your Purpose

You're not just cutting timber. You're adapting, stewarding and leading through change. Remind yourself and your crew of the bigger picture. A strong sense of purpose can help you weather the toughest transitions.

Strengthen Crew Connection

Meeting face-to-face builds rapport, improves clarity and understanding and encourages open dialogue. For your operation, this could mean:

- Daily tailgate meetings at the landing to check in on morale and clarify expectations.
- Coffee chats at camp or during equipment maintenance breaks to build trust and open communication.

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Kim Miller Logging's breakfast team meeting

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- Letting your crew know it's okay to speak up by creating a safe space to ask questions, speak openly about challenges and share ideas.

You set the tone. If you're open and approachable, they will be too. This isn't just good leadership, it's essential for safety and morale.

Plan for Flexibility, Not Perfection

The best plans are the ones that adapt under pressure. Think in scenarios:

- What if the wildfire season starts early?
- What if timber access diminishes?
- What if regulation changes?
- What if timber prices drop again?
- What if I can't find enough trained operators?



Run through these possibilities with your team and plan for contingencies. Planning for contingencies helps everyone stay mentally prepared and ready to evolve.

Be Mindful of Social Media

When stress builds up, it's easy to get pulled into negative social media. Constant exposure to bad news, industry frustrations or online arguments can drain your energy and make things feel even heavier.

If you notice that scrolling is replacing time with family, outdoors or real rest, it's worth stepping back. Social media can be a powerful tool for connecting with peers, sharing solutions or finding inspiration; however, it needs to be used intentionally.

Prioritize what restores you, not what wears you down.

Invest in Personal Wellbeing

The physical and emotional demands of forestry work are real. Make wellbeing part of your routine:

- Talk openly about stress, fatigue and burnout.
- Encourage proper hydration, sleep and breaks.
- Share simple resources like wellness posters or BCFSC checklists.
- Let your crew know it's okay to ask for help. If you have access to an Employee and Family Assistance programme (EFAP), promote it.

Build Leadership Resilience

To lead effectively in challenging times, strengthen your foundation by:

- Connecting with peer networks or industry associations.
- Attending in person training or industry events.
- Sharing challenges and solutions with other contractors.

Leverage Safety and Communication

Strengthen team cohesion and adaptability by:

- Empowering crew members who demonstrate leadership in safety and communication.
- Integrating change fatigue awareness into existing safety training programs.
- Using tailgate meetings as a structured way to introduce operational changes gradually.
- Encouraging open dialogue during downtime in camp to surface concerns and solutions.
- Inviting visitors such as BCFSC Safety Advisors to provide fresh perspectives and support.

You're Not Alone

Change fatigue is a systemic challenge, not a personal failure. Small businesses bring unique strengths: adaptability, grit and deep community roots. Lean on your networks, talk to other contractors, mill owners, associations and forestry professionals. Reach out and share what's working or to ask for help. Visit the BCFSC Website for training and resource inspiration or contact our office to connect with your regional safety advisor.

The path forward isn't about doing more, it's about focusing on what matters and doing it together. 🌲



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