



**BC Forest Safety**

Safety is **good** business

**BC FOREST SAFETY  
OMBUDSMAN REPORT  
2017**



# A steady path forward

This is the eleventh annual report of the BC Forest Safety Ombudsman, and the third consecutive year that the forest industry in British Columbia has had 10 fatalities.

It is also the third year that injury and serious injury rates have remained largely unchanged.

Fatality and injury rates continue to be disproportionately associated with transportation (log hauling) and falling.

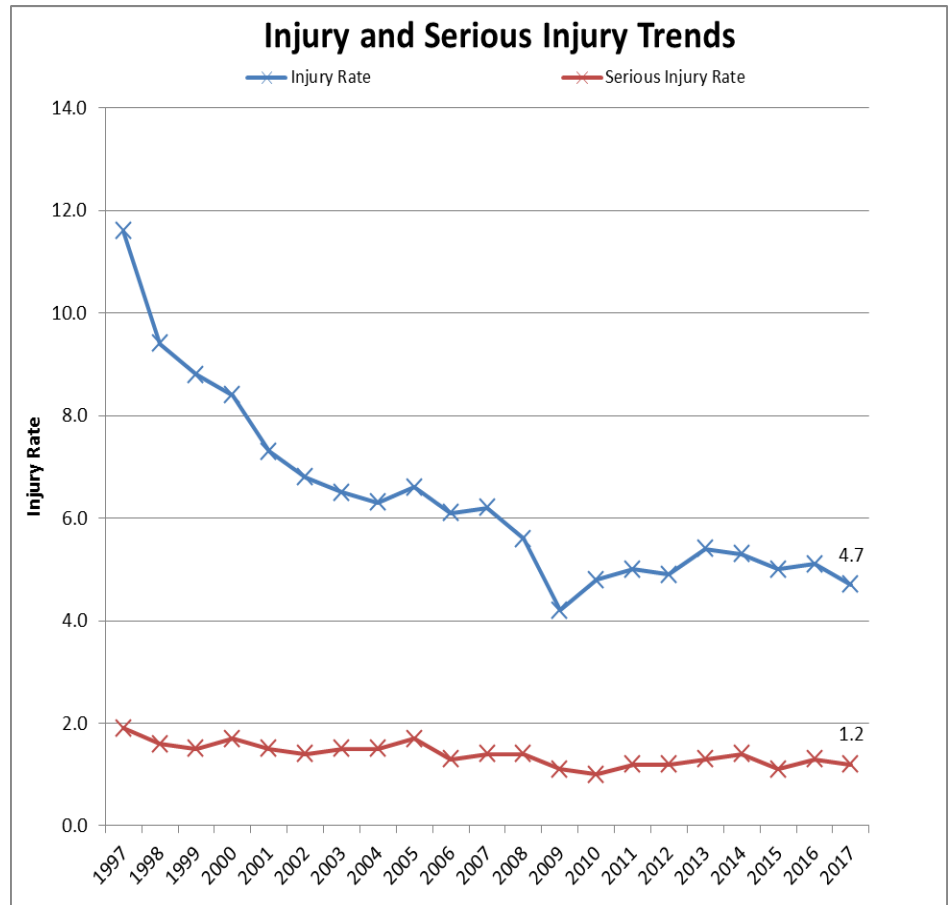
While the statistics for fatalities and injuries have stayed relatively the same, the recent focus on manual tree falling appears to be having a positive impact as there has been a reduction in the number of injuries and fatalities associated with falling and bucking. In 2017, the injury rate for manual tree falling was 22.7 which represents one of the lowest injury rates on record outside of 2009 (18.8). While still high, the focus on manual tree falling appears to be generating success.

The same cannot be said for log hauling and transportation, where incident rates continue to be unacceptable and rising. 50% of the direct harvesting work-related deaths in 2016 and 2017 combined involved log truck drivers and 80% of those fatalities were in the interior.

While there has been some progress in safety outcomes over the last year, it is unclear whether the current statistics are reflective of a 'plateauing' effect, or if the statistics are just a pause in what will soon become an improving trend as benefits from recent industry initiatives and programs are realized.

Either way, transportation (log hauling) activities will require some serious attention in the coming year in order to reverse current safety trends.

## Summary of Activities



The Ombudsman's Office focused on three areas during 2017 and the first half of 2018.

### 1. Helicopter Emergency Medical Services Report (HEMS)

As follow-up to the release of the HEMS report, the Ombudsman managed a number of requests to speak on the issue of HEMS, and met with numerous provincial and municipal government representatives.

### 2. Faller Certification

The Ombudsman managed a number of enquiries related to faller certification and the ability to challenge the Falling

Standard in order to achieve certification. These enquiries resulted in a condensed review of the issues associated with faller certification.

Since the changes in WorkSafeBC regulations, there is no longer a grandfathering process for individuals with previous falling experience to challenge the falling standard. There may be a case to revisit the current regulations to determine if there are some tools that could be available to assessors (combination of written/oral, verifiable work history, interview) that can take into consideration work experience and training, other than what is currently captured in the regulations.

### 3. Phase Congestion Report

The production of the Phase Congestion report consumed a significant portion of time this past year. The report provides some context to the evolution that has taken place within the industry as a result of technological, contractual, regulatory and market changes.

Other activities by the Office of the Ombudsman included:

### 4. Resource Roads

The Ombudsman's Office received a number of calls from the public in 2017 regarding log hauling activities where public and resource roads came into conflict.

### 5. Outreach

The Ombudsman's Office continued to participate in a number of industry conventions including: the Truck Loggers Association (TLA), Council of Forest Industries (COFI), Western Forestry Contractors' Association (WFCA), and the Falling Technical Advisory Committee (FTAC). As well, the Ombudsman made a number of presentations to Chambers of Commerce and local governments on the topic of HEMS, and also attended both the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) and Northern Interior Local Government Association (NILGA).

### Outstanding Issues

Some of the key issues that remain outstanding include:

#### 1. Resources roads

Our office still receives calls from the public regarding hauling activities on resource roads that are used by the public. Those calls are most frequent prior to spring break up when many companies increase hauling activities in order to beat the imposition of road bans. Interaction with the public is only going to increase in coming years, so it is important that the forest industry continues to keep the public informed on harvesting activities – especially log-hauling in those rural locations where a community uses resource roads as its community highway.



*Roger Harris, BC Forest Safety Ombudsman.*

#### 2. Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS)

The Ombudsman's Report on HEMS continues to be of interest to a number of organizations and communities. Both the NILGA and the UBCM have passed motions supporting the recommendations contained in the report, and the provincial government requested a briefing for its caucus. While there have been some government actions to increase funding for ambulance services, the core obstacle of the lack of a legally mandated response time is still missing.

#### 3. Intimidation

This has not been an issue over the last few years, but during the research for the Ombudsman's "Phase Congestion" report, work-place intimidation was very noticeable as reflected by the number of individuals and organizations who were reluctant to be quoted in the report. Real progress in addressing safety-related issues will never be achieved in an atmosphere that does not support and encourage free and open dialogue.

In addition, the BCFSC and WorkSafeBC have made significant strides in their efforts to collaborate on industry initiatives aimed at reducing injuries and

fatalities. Examples of these efforts are supported by improved alignment on forestry high risk strategies. In addition, regular meetings now take place with senior leadership from industry and WorkSafeBC to review initiatives aimed at improving worker safety. Although improving, the relationship between the BCFSC and WorkSafeBC would benefit from increased clarity and possibly transparency in how the two agencies interact and who has responsibility for specific areas of responsibility. Efforts need to continue to more clearly define this relationship.

### Plan for 2018/19

For the upcoming 2018/2019 year, the Ombudsman's Office will continue to provide support to the BCFSC and will follow-up on both the HEMS and Phase Congestion Reviews. The Ombudsman will continue to participate in outreach events such as the TLA, WFCA, COFI, local government and Chamber of Commerce meetings as requested.

Finally, with the lack of progress on safety outcomes related to transportation (log hauling), our Office will consider engaging the sector to determine whether we can support the BCFSC and industry's efforts to improve safety outcomes.

### **About the BC Forest Safety Ombudsman**

*The BC Forest Safety Ombudsman is part of the BC Forest Safety Council, and is mandated to investigate safety concerns and provide recommendations for improvement. The Office of the Forest Safety Ombudsman provides a safe, confidential environment for the discussion of issues, and facilitates an impartial and timely resolution of concerns.*

### **Contact the BC Forest Safety Ombudsman**

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Email: [harris@bcforestsafe.org](mailto:harris@bcforestsafe.org)

Website: <http://www.bcforestsafe.org/ombudsman.html>

The Forest Safety Ombudsman's Office will endeavour to return all contacts within five (5) working days.

### **About the BC Forest Safety Council**

*The BC Forest Safety Council (BCFSC) is the health and safety association for forest harvesting, sawmills, and pellet manufacturing in BC. The BCFSC works with forest sector employers, workers, unions, contractors and provincial agencies to support implementing changes necessary to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries in the forest sector.*



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