



BC Forest Safety

**EVERY
WORKER**

DESERVES TO
GO HOME **SAFE**
EVERY DAY

2018 OMBUDSMAN REPORT
BC FOREST SAFETY COUNCIL

THE RIGHT TRACK

This is the 12th BC Forest Safety Ombudsman report. Each year we have used this report to provide general observations on how the forest sector is doing in achieving the goals the industry has set for themselves.

Shifting an industry that had the highest injury and accidents rates in the province and where a culture of acceptability was ingrained, to significant reductions and one where these statistics and attitudes are no longer tolerated, is no easy task. This is and has been a complex challenge requiring complex initiatives, total commitment and buy-in from each and every individual, organization, corporation and association in the forest sector.

While statistics have fluctuated year to year, the overall trends, especially in the higher risk falling sector, have continued to move in a positive direction. The layering of initiatives, establishment of the Falling Technical Advisory Committee (FTAC), standardizing Faller training, graduated Faller certification, the certification of Faller Supervisor, have all combined to transform Falling from an occupation to a profession. There is significant evidence to support that this incremental and collaborative approach and direction the forest sector has taken could also be applied to other disciplines with high incident rates such as log truck driving to generate similar improved safety results.

Safety is not a static activity. As the Phase Congestion Report identified, the economics, technology and regulatory environment around the forest sector is constantly changing and sometimes dynamically. Change will always be challenging and in many cases difficult to predict. The industry needs to be vigilant, and adapt human skill sets, knowledge, attitudes, and operating procedures to stay ahead of the curves. The current successes only prove that as an industry the goal for zero accidents is achievable, if the commitment to the task is there. Safety is not an outcome, but a process that will continue to require constant vigilance.

2018

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



A lot of time and energy in 2018 was in responding to requests by individuals and organizations within the BC Forest Safety Council (BCFSC) membership and staff to undertake internal reviews on a number of topic areas, some of which are outlined below. The number of enquiries to our office was down in 2018 from 2017 and focused in the following areas: **Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS), Resource Roads, SAFE Companies, Log Truck Driving and Faller Certification (challenging the standards)**. Many of the enquiries and issues were referred to BCFSC staff for remedy. Log Truck Driving continues to be an area where the number of fatalities and accidents are high and this sector requires increased attention. In the northern regions where resource activity is high especially in the oil and gas sector the competition for workers is high, so recruitment and retention present some additional challenges.

1. HEMS

The HEMS report continues to garner interest from government, the forest industry and the public. Our office made a number of presentations again in 2018 including meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Preparedness. At the request of the BCFSC, our office supported the development of a communications strategy for engaging the province to look at a HEMS pilot project. Our office was asked to participate in a 2-day forum on rural health conference – “BC Provincial Health Care Partners’ Retreat” which was attended by over 120 individuals representing the Ministry of Health, the five Provincial Health Authorities, Medical Health Care Professionals, the UBC Center for Rural Health Research, BC Emergency Health Services, BC Ambulance Service, local Municipal and First Nation governments to discuss rural health care issues of which HEMS is a component.

2. FALLER CERTIFICATION

In 2018 there were again some enquiries related to faller certification and the ability to challenge the Falling Standard in order to achieve certification. The lack of a grandfathering process for individuals with previous falling experience to challenge the falling standard will lessen over time, but remains an issue for some individuals who wish to return to the industry. This is a delicate issue and any changes to facilitate the requests must incorporate measures to ensure that the highest standards are maintained in any certification process. Our office continued to participate in FTAC meetings throughout the year, working with the committee on a number of falling initiatives.



3. PHASE CONGESTION REPORT

Our office was asked to participate in a number of meetings in 2018 as follow-up to the original Phase Congestion Report. That participation was to help support efforts of industry in advancing some of the Report recommendations, provide observations on initiatives that were being taken by industry, review WorkSafeBC high risk strategies, and provide comment on industry actions to date.

4. RESOURCE ROADS

The Ombudsman's Office also received a number of calls from the public in 2018 regarding log hauling activities where public and resource roads came into conflict. The enquiries come in two forms – either concerns over maintenance of the roads or levels of log hauling activity, which normally occur during spring break up.

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), Coastal Harvesting Advisory Group (CHAG) and the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM).

6. INTIMIDATION

As reported in the 2017 Annual Review, 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. There was one call to our office in 2018 where a worker felt too intimidated to raise an issue. Our office believes that real and significant progress has been made in this area; but, this is a reminder that addressing safety-related issues will achieve greater success in an atmosphere that supports and encourages free and open dialogue. This is an area that will always require constant attention.

Lastly another area that requires constant refinement is the relationship between the BCFSC and WorkSafeBC. Although there are fewer enquiries where this issue is raised both organizations would continue to benefit from increased clarity in how the two agencies interact. With the BCFSC seen as the certifier and WorkSafeBC as the regulator, there will always be a level of uncertainty on who has responsibility and in what areas, so continued work on bringing clarity to this will benefit both organizations.

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.

Telephone (toll free): 1-877-741-1060
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“ While statistics have fluctuated year to year, the overall trends, especially in the higher risk falling sector, have continued to move in a positive direction. ”



Roger Harris

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





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