



Council History

The BC Forest Safety Council was created in September 2004 after the release eight months earlier of a unanimous report from the provincial government's Forest Safety Task Force. The mandate of the task force had been to set out a comprehensive strategy to reduce high levels of injuries and fatalities in the forest sector. Its membership consisted of representatives of companies, unions, independent contractors, forestry associations and the Workers' Compensation Board of B.C. (since renamed WorkSafeBC).

The task force started work in late 2003 and cast a broad net for information and ideas, building initially on a 2002 study by the Industrial Wood and Allied Workers of Canada. It identified factors driving historically poor safety performance, including widespread resistance to change, a resource disparity between large forestry companies and small contractors, extreme climate and terrain conditions in timber harvesting and a stressed and aging forestry workforce.

Two key outcomes flowed from the comprehensive report of the task force.

- The industry's adoption in April 2004 of the Health and Safety Accord for the BC Forestry Industry, proposed by the task force to formalize basic principles for a new safety culture.
- The creation of the Council, a not-for-profit society of major forestry organizations, funded by industry through WorkSafeBC and the provincial government.

Our Mission and Mandate

The Council's mission is to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries in the forest sector. We are working to develop an enduring forest safety infrastructure across B.C., providing the industry with leadership and focus on all aspects of this crucial issue. We work with employers, workers, contractors and government agencies to implement fundamental changes necessary to make it safer to earning a living in forestry.

Representing its member organizations, the Council speaks on forest safety issues and marshals the resources required to reduce death and injury in the woods. It is also the custodian of the task force report and is responsible for its implementation.

Our operating beliefs are that all forestry fatalities and injuries are preventable, that workers' safety is an overriding priority and that the industry's long-term success depends on safety. All this underlies the Council's four-part mandate:

- Foster Cultural Change to ensure that safety is treated as an overriding priority and a shared responsibility throughout the sector
- Promote a Safety-Conscious Legal Regime in which the laws, regulations and compliance programs encourage and support safety
- Develop a Competent and Confident Workforce with workers are trained, certified and encouraged to work safely
- Encourage Qualified Companies whose effective safety programs are recognized and rewarded

Who We Are

Council membership currently includes all major forest industry organizations in B.C. We are open to any industry groups in the harvesting and silviculture sectors that want to work with us achieve the Council's mandate. Initially, we had 13 member organizations, but this number has grown to 15 members and one participant observer, WorkSafeBC:

- BC Community Forest Association
- BC Timber Sales
- Central Interior Logging Association
- Coastal Forest Products Association
- Council of Forest Industries
- Federation of BC Woodlot Associations
- Interior Logging Association
- Interior Lumber Manufacturers' Association
- Interior Lumber Manufacturers' Association
- Ministry of Forests and Range
- North West Loggers Association
- Truck Loggers Association
- United Steelworkers District 3
- Western Fallers Association
- Western Silvicultural Contractors' Association
- WorkSafeBC

Member organizations represent workers or business enterprises directly or indirectly involved in harvesting or transporting timber or in delivering silvicultural services in the province. Each member names a representative as a director on the Council board.

The board currently meets five times a year, with the annual general meeting conducted in conjunction with the December meeting.

Funding

At the Council's creation in 2004, it obtained an initial five year/\$11 million funding agreement from the industry's WorkSafeBC assessments. Wherever possible and practical, the Council ensures that organizations and individuals benefiting from our programs and initiatives support them through cost-sharing.

Major Programs

Since its creation, the Council has collaborated with industry to develop, implement and continually improve four initiatives to improve forest safety practices and attitudes.

SAFE Companies — This is our flagship program, certifying B.C. forestry operations that show a commitment to safety and demonstrate, through audits, that their safety programs meet industry standards. This earns SAFE-certification status for companies of all sizes, from individual owner operators to the largest firms.

The Council is also a certifying partner to WorkSafeBC's Certificate of Recognition (COR) program. As a result, companies achieving SAFE Certification from the Council are also eligible to receive COR recognition from WorkSafeBC, and a 10% rebate on their assessments.

Effective January 1, 2009, certification becomes a pre-requisite to bid on B.C. crown forest contracts.

Forest Worker Development — This program supports the industry's commitment to develop a labour force that is confident, competent and well-trained. Since 2006, over 8,500 workers, employer representatives and others completed our training.

Council offerings include courses for general forestry supervisors and faller supervisors and for employers, individual owner operators, auditors and safety advocates involved in the SAFE Companies program.

Forest Worker Development is sole provider for new faller training and certification of forestry fallers in the province. Over 100 new fallers have been trained in the last three years. We also administer the faller certification system in the province, which currently includes over 3,000 members.

Forestry TruckSafe — This program pursues initiatives to promote safe drivers, safe vehicles and safer roads in B.C. forestry. The focus is on advocacy and outreach, information and education, and collaboration with partners inside and outside the industry.

Beginning in 2005 with three large scale constituent meetings on transportation issues, Forestry TruckSafe has provided input in technical and policy development processes, such as the steep slope operating standards project, acted as a convener and organizer for community road user groups around the province, and provided an identifiable point of contact for concerns, input, up-to-date information or referral to other sources for people who want individualized, practical answers on forestry transportation issues.

Forest Safety Ombudsman — The Council appoints an independent ombudsman to conduct reviews and produce reports on major forest safety issues and to be an impartial third party for individual cases involving safety.

Roger Harris, the first ombudsman, has held the position since 2006. Last year, he worked on a comprehensive review of resource road safety for release in early 2008 and was involved in 38 individual cases.

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