

Forest safety

by TANNER ELTON

A little more than two years ago, the name Ted Gramlich filled media reports across B.C., and it was the worst possible news. The veteran faller had died in hospital two hours after being hit by the tree he was falling on a remote hillside too fogbound to allow quick evacuation by helicopter. The tragedy happened about a month before Christmas, and it came to symbolize a truly terrible year for the forestry industry: forty-three forest workers died earning a living in 2005. But it was the Gramlich case that drew much public attention and led to the first coroner's inquest into a forest worker's death in decades.

Remembering Ted Gramlich is appropriate now, as the BC Forest Safety Council broadens its system of certifying fallers. Certification is a legal requirement for anyone to work as a faller in this province, and our approach to faller certification is similar to that for driver's licences.

In 2008, in addition to introducing faller certification renewal fees, the council is going a step further. While drivers can renew their licences simply by paying fees, we are preparing for formal on-site re-evaluation of the work practices of the province's 3,600 certified fallers.

This next phase of faller certification—assessing individual certified fallers every three years—is intended to assure they perform according to the established BC Faller Training Standard. Those with the appropriate skills will also be able to raise their certification levels, which specify the maximum slope and tree diameter at which their

previous evaluations were conducted.

But this is not the be-all and end-all. Faller certification is one part of a concerted industry effort to make all forest workers and worksites as safe as possible. Taking advantage of BC Forest Safety Council programs, companies of all types and sizes are investing money and commitment in the effort. They know the need is undeniable.

More has been said and done about forestry safety in B.C. recently than in the previous decade. Safety is now definitely front and centre. Hundreds of companies have proved that they meet necessary standards by passing safety audits, and the entire industry is focusing on this critical issue.

It is a dramatic shift, one that pays clear dividends in addition to fewer lives

lost and disrupted. The ultimate goal is to eliminate serious injuries and fatalities in the working woods. **KB**

Tanner Elton is the CEO and executive director of the BC Forest Safety Council.



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to the people who work in British Columbia's forest sector. Everyone wants to get home safe at the end of the day.

The BC Forest Safety Council is working with employers and workers to improve safety programs and performance. We are training workers and companies to recognize and manage the hazards of working in the forest.

The SAFE Companies program is now underway. Companies can register, have their safety programs audited, get certified and receive rebates on their WCB payments.

Call now for information about how you or your company can participate in training and SAFE Companies activities.



BC Forest Safety Council
Unsafe is Unacceptable