

# Focus on Safety

by Roger Harris

## Help Silviculture Workers Survive Resource Roads

Few people experience the hazards of bush roads the way silviculture workers do. Fully-loaded, tree-planting vehicles are filled with workers, so the potential consequences from any single crash are significant. Compounding that risk factor is the fact that drivers typically tend to be 20-year-old summer students, used to driving no more than their parent's sub-compact. Suddenly they're operating crew cabs carrying a half dozen people and a canopy filled with a heavy load of trees. It's an alien environment, and on top of that they are using roads that are not maintained to familiar standards. They must deal with logging trucks barreling around corners and other hazards. Crews move from region to region throughout the season, with local practices and conditions changing dramatically.

Of course, it's no surprise that what the province calls resource roads are hazardous for everyone traveling them, not just silviculture workers. The problems are well-documented.

This February, a report on resource road issues in BC was released that went beyond forestry, since our logging roads serve other industries including mining, gas, oil, tourism, and more. These roads may also be the only access to the public highway system for some isolated communities. This study led to 17 recommendations, and following are three of the most important ones:

- Through its Ministry of Forests and Range, the BC government should establish regional road safety management groups to oversee effective problem-solving for specific resource roads.
- The province should also designate resource roads as public highways where they serve as primary or secondary access routes to communities.

- All resource road users must be trained for a driving environment that is much more hazardous than public highways. The Forest Safety Council should take the lead in developing an industrial driver's certification program that includes the full range of commercial vehicles and trailer configurations on resource roads, no matter what their industry. Training should be given to drivers of light vehicles such as pick-up trucks, passenger vans, ATVs, and four-wheel-drive vehicles.

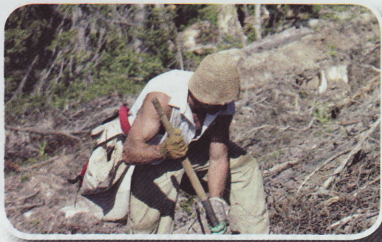
Probably of most interest to the silviculture industry is the third recommendation, which the Western Silvicultural Contractors' Association had anticipated with its ongoing efforts to develop and introduce separate training programs for drivers of ATVs and light vehicles.

Initiatives like those are crucial if employers are to assure the resource road safety of silviculture drivers, their passengers, and the occupants of other back-country vehicles.

The demand for better resource road management can only grow. Prime factors in BC range from inland port development to steadily expanding activity in industries such as mining, oil, and gas. Similar issues are undoubtedly in play across Canada.

Everyone agrees that action is needed now because time is not our friend. It is a mortal enemy of all the men and women who drive our resource roads every day. For them, this is truly a matter of life or death.

Roger Harris is BC Forest Safety Ombudsman. His first two reports are at [www.bcforestsafe.org/nav-ombud.html](http://www.bcforestsafe.org/nav-ombud.html).



### Addendum: Getting Tree Planting Fit

We would like to acknowledge the contributions that Dr. Delia Roberts made to the Getting Tree Planting Fit article in the February issue of *Canadian Silviculture* as well as the photos supplied by Dave Gluns. We would also like to give credit to FRIAA and FERIC who funded the study, Weyerhaeuser that developed the program, and Selkirk College that continues to provide free delivery of the Fit to Plant program.



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