



PROFESSIONAL LOG TRUCK DRIVER COMPETENCY PROGRAM— CREATED BY LOG TRUCK DRIVERS

As the Professional Log Truck Driver Competency Program is piloted in British Columbia, some important questions are being asked by contractors, log truck drivers and industry associations. For any safety initiative to be successful, the people who are directly affected need to understand why the initiative is taking place, how it will affect them (and what is expected of them), and they need to trust that the initiative is something that is meaningful.

Why did contractors build the program?

Dave Barden, owner of Barden Contracting Ltd. and a member of the Log Truck Technical Advisory Committee (LTTAC), says: “In the late 1980s it became unfashionable and even demeaning to be in the trade industry. Silicon Val-

ley and the tech world was the way of the future. Couple that with kids watching their dads come home tired, late and discouraged, and dads telling their kids ‘Go get an education and stay out of the bush,’ and it is no wonder that we lost a generation of workers in our industry.”

Barden became involved in 2005-2008 with the log hauling champion, Mary-Anne Arcand (now deceased) and numerous others who were concerned about safety, public reputation, and winning back people to the log hauling industry. More recently, LTTAC was formed to focus on these concerns. “There was much skepticism in the industry and the public alike that nothing could or would be done,” says Barden. “But with a lot of work from a lot of dedicated people I honestly believe that we can and are accomplishing what we set out to do. We desperately

need young, skilled people back in the industry and with this log truck program we have developed I think we can provide a base where someone can be proud once again to say ‘I’m a log truck driver.’”

Peter Bueckert of J. Bueckert Logging Ltd. and also a member of the LTTAC, was similarly motivated to get involved in the program: “I saw the erosion of the professionalism of the drivers. I felt we needed a consistent message about driver expectations. I know firsthand the knowledge and experience of the people developing the program and with the passion these people have for our industry this program was the best one in the world to make a difference.”

What’s in the program?

The program is based on the identification of the skills, knowledge and attri-



Logging spruce for aircraft in Haida Gwaii, in the 1940s.
Image NA-07107 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives.



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butes (occupational competencies) that are required to be a successful, safe log hauling professional.

Ron Volansky, Principal of R&A Logging Ltd., based in the Kootenays, worked as a subject matter expert on the development of the training and says “I tried to have input that would be understandable across BC as different regions have different challenges and logging language. My goal was to create a program that would recognize workers’ capabilities and strengthen the areas that they are weak in; provide the driver with the basic concepts of safety, knowledge and ability to do the task at hand; and, to create documentation that is standard across BC and can be provided to an employer as a transcript of driver qualifications.”

How is the program being used?

In addition to providing a training standard for industry to train new drivers, the program is also being used to recognize the competency of experienced drivers and identify any gaps in knowledge, skills or attributes that may have gone unrecognized.

Bueckert is using the program to train drivers and has been impressed with the results. “Not only does the driver have a

solid base of training for our industry, the assessment identifies the gaps and I know where I need to focus my time, making training much more efficient,” he says. “This will bring the professionalism back into our industry.”

Volansky explains that “The trucker competency program will create a tool that can make the hiring process easier. The transcript will provide me with a detailed ability of the worker and eliminate the overlapping of training, because it provides me with documentation of past experience and creates an avenue for me as the employer to continue training the worker.”

The standardized tools are currently paper-based for the pilot program, but will be made available electronically post pilot with training modules. Tools include a competency conversation and a practical assessment tool to measure an individual’s ability to operate the log truck safely to meet the competency requirements. A safety critical competency conversation and the practical assessment are used to assess experienced log haulers. The assessments are conducted by professional log truck drivers who have been selected through a review

process and have successfully completed assessor training.

No action required unless you want to be part of a pilot

There has been significant interest in the program, with assessments currently underway in the Kootenays, Northwest Coastal, the Interior and on Vancouver Island. The pilot phase started October 12, 2017, and will continue through October 2018. Contractors, log truck drivers, trainers, assessors and licensees will provide feedback to help shape the final program. While the program is in its early pilot stage—and was developed as a guideline—many are already saying that this guideline could become a benchmark.

If you have questions regarding the program, or would like to participate in a pilot, please contact me at 250-562-3215 or email tkohorst@bcforestsafesafe.org.[▲]

Trish Kohorst, RFT, is the Transportation Safety Manager for the BC Forest Safety Council and works out of their Prince George office and can be reached at 250-562-3215 or tkohorst@bcforestsafesafe.org.

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