



WORKSAFEBC FORESTRY HIGH RISK STRATEGY UPDATE FOR 2019

Forestry by its nature continues to be a high-risk industry; its serious-injury rate of 1.2 (per 100 workers) in 2017 was four times the provincial average.

That's why WorkSafeBC's 2018-20 Forestry High Risk Strategy (FHRS) continues to target the highest-risk activities in harvesting: manual tree falling, log transportation, cable-yarding operations, mechanized harvesting including tethered-equipment operations, and silviculture. The goal is simple: to reduce the serious-injury rate through inspections that may include consultation with workers and employers as well as education.

Falling

Manual tree falling had the highest serious-injury rate of any occupation in forestry in 2017 at 6.6—making it, once again, the single most hazardous job in

BC. Although injury rates have declined over the last decade, conditions are also changing, including operations increasingly moving into steeper terrain, equipment advances are transforming how some work gets done, new fallers are entering the workplace, and the established workforce is getting older, with an average age of 57.

In 2019, WorkSafeBC's dedicated falling team will focus their inspections on employers with new-faller training sites, a history of injuries, or repeat compliance issues, supporting the development of effective, sustainable health and safety programs.

These inspections will also assess the level of qualified supervision of hand fallers questioning if the type and frequency of supervisory inspection reflect the level of risk at the falling site? Is the

qualified supervisor ensuring the worker is appropriately assessing risks and following established safe work procedures to reduce or eliminate them? Also, do the fallers and supervisors know when to say stop or no to work that is too risky?

Officers will look at new faller training programs, falling practices including cuts, danger-tree and windfall management, unavoidable brushing practices, and roadside or skid-trail debris hazards that have been created and left for the hand faller. They will support these inspections with outreach to workers and employers and collaborative problem-solving.

Phase Congestion

In 2019, the FHRS will add a survey tool that will assess how phase integration

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(*self-reported in recent surveys of log truck drivers by the BCFSC.)

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is being managed, asking if the employers at the site understand key risks that can occur, such as phase congestion.

Congestion occurs when the phases of timber harvesting overlap, resulting in the overcrowding of work activities and potentially significant risks to workers. Poor planning and scheduling, as well as inadequate communication among workers, employers and contractors have been identified as contributing factors.

To help assess these risks, WorkSafeBC has developed a tool that will be used by officers conducting logging inspections in the coming months. A simple questionnaire will enable them to identify risks along with controls that are critical to their mitigation. Officers will seek input from employers on how to make the tool most effective, and ultimately make a version available to employers for their own use.

Log Hauling

Log transportation has eclipsed manual falling when it comes to worker fatalities in the last two years, unfortunately, making log hauling, with a serious-injury

rate of 1.9, one of the highest-risk occupations in forestry.

Serious injuries typically result from motor vehicle incidents and loading/unloading activities, but WorkSafeBC has also seen a steady rise in musculoskeletal claims for shoulder and arm injuries related to throwing wrappers. Officers will inspect these operations for driving and road assessment; loading, off-loading and securing practices; maintenance work practices including lockout, access, and egress; cab guards; and binder use and installation.

Mechanized Equipment

With mechanized harvesting, the biggest risks come from maintenance work, getting on and off machinery, equipment loss of stability, and congestion. Therefore inspections will focus on maintenance work plans and lockout procedures, three-point-contact procedures, steep-slope assessment plans, safe operation of traction-assist and tethered equipment, and site planning and layout.

Cable-Yarding

For cable-yarding operations, where the most common mechanisms of injury are slips and falls, being struck by logs, and congestion, officers will look at clearing the turn, yarding angles, landing the log, and site planning and layout. Cable yarding has, in fact, seen an increase in injuries instead of the desired decrease, with a general injury rate of 8.3 in 2017 compared to 6.6 in 2016.

Emergency response planning and hearing protection continue to be priorities for all phases of operation.

For detailed information on the parts of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation that prevention officers will focus on, employers should refer to the Forestry HRS Compliance Guide. It describes the relevant sections and guidelines for each harvesting activity.

For further information on the FHRS, visit worksafebc.com and search on "Forestry High Risk Strategy."▲

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