







## TEAAM IS A SOLUTION TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

By John Betts

For years, the Truck Loggers Association, Interior Logging Association and Western Forestry Contractors' Association have collectively advocated for increased support of helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS) that our employees deserve while working in remote or difficult access sites. In particular, the HEMS model provided by Technical Emergency Advanced Aero Medical (TEAAM). Since 2017, this group has been providing this much needed service for the forestry sector, as well as mining, oil & gas and tourism.

As associations who represent employers' groups we strive to make our industry's workplaces safe and have all made improving workplace emergency response preparation and practice a strategic priority. We believe providing HEMS as part of the next step will help

our industry reach our goal of zero fatalities and reduce the traumatic impacts of serious injuries, which has led to our collaboration in promoting TEAAM to our members, along with agency and government decision makers.

The majority of our crews work on remote or difficult to access locations throughout BC. Due to the extended time it takes to extract and transport patients from the site to emergency medical care, they risk worse consequences for their injuries. The well documented "Golden Hour" shows that faster emergency response times greatly increase the probability of an injured worker surviving a workplace injury and minimizing the impact of serious injuries. There are few situations in this Province where an injured forest worker could be in an emergency

ward within an hour under current response regimes. In most cases it would be well beyond that time. If HEMS were in place it could shorten response times saving lives and limbs—this is what TEAAM offers.

The current model of injured patient transport from remote worksites involves several modes of transport and transfers between transporters and first aid attendants (helicopter, boat, pickup truck, search and rescue, fire/rescue, ambulance, etc.) often creating lengthy times before the patient actually receives the higher level of care, and potentially increasing negative outcomes. Additionally, 911 call centres are not experienced or equipped with the resources to effectively communicate and coordinate workers from a remote worksite to a hospital. This is unacceptable.



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Even though TEAAM has only been in place for a short time, operating from one base with limited private funding, they have already made a significant difference in reducing the consequences to seriously injured workers in our sector. Since inception, they have treated and transported five insured workers including fallers, tree planters, etc.

TEAAM provides sophisticated emergency medical care direct from remote site to hospital, providing the quick response that should be the minimum standard for our crews at remote work-sites. TEAAM's crew and equipment at an incident can shrink the precious time between a serious injury occurring and the patient receiving stabilizing treatment. It can then shorten transportation time by flying directly to the closest trauma centre. These potentially life and limb-saving features are critical given the remote and difficult settings where our sector works and injuries occur. It provides an extension of emergency treatment and rescue well beyond the capacity and timely reach of our public ambulance service. This is what sets them apart. We believe that

the advanced technical and medical service ability of the TEAAM model combined with our public healthcare system should be the standard of care for forestry workplaces in BC.

We also believe that our organizations, WorkSafeBC and the BC Forest Safety Council have an opportunity to work collectively to improve worker safety outcomes in BC. WorkSafeBC has a vested interest and role to play in helping the forest and other resource sectors reach the goal of having a comprehensive HEMS service available province-wide. Reducing fatalities and decreasing traumatic impacts of serious injuries present both a moral and business case for WorkSafeBC.

To advance this, we propose:

- WorkSafeBC undertake a business case analysis for operating a HEMS model for remote workers in BC. This would compare available data, risks, costs and benefits involved in funding a provincial HEMS. We expect that work would include examining comparable schemes such as the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Services (STARS) in Alberta as well

as airborne emergency response operations in Europe and the US.

- WorkSafeBC fund TEAAM's current operations as an interim pilot to prove the HEMS concept for BC, gathering operational data on costs and making any recommendations to improve effectiveness.

Time is of the essence to preserve TEAAM should its private patronage scheme fail to fully support its operations; without timely support it may not be able to operate over the long term. Acting with some urgency will prevent this possibility and its consequences.

The TEAAM's success so far is proof of concept already. It certainly is for those workers who have benefitted from their service. At the same time, more employers and their crews are seeing the benefits of HEMS as TEAAM becomes better known across the sector. This is contributing to justified rising expectations around improving the standard of emergency response for workers on remote and difficult sites across the Province.▲

## Advertisers' Index:

	Page #		Page #
A&A Trading Ltd.	4	Nexgen Hearing Industrial Division	52
BC Forest Safety Council	18	North Island Communications	37
Brandt Tractor Ltd.	9 & 52	Petro-Canada/Coastal Mountain Fuels	12
Brutus Truck Bodies	36	Ponsse PLC	29
CIBC Wood Gundy	36	Ponting Contracting Ltd.	26
Diamond Industries Ltd.	46	Prolenc Manufacturing Inc.	26
Enex Fuels	55	Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers	56
Far North Contracting Ltd.	52	Tilt Contracting Ltd.	39
Finning	6 & 52	TM Lask Enterprises Ltd.	52
Ford Motor Company of Canada	15	V.I. Equipment Ltd.	52
Inland Group	2 & 52	West Coast Tug & Barge	4
Island Spring Ltd.	44	Westerra Equipment - Doosan	11
Langley Excavator Parts Exchange	52	Westerra Equipment - Vermeer	19
Johnstone's Benefits -TLA	27	Woodland Equipment Ltd. - Eltec	20
Johnstone's Benefits -ILA/NWLA	37	Woodland Equipment Ltd. - Hyundai	32
Justice Institute of BC/Road Safety At Work	28	WorkSafeBC	45
Marine Link Transportation Ltd.	27		
Marsh LLC	16		
New Line Hose & Fittings	44		