



HEALTH AND SAFETY WHILE CONTINUING OR RESUMING FORESTRY OPERATIONS

Even during the best of times, the forestry sector shoulders a heavy load of uncertainty due to changing conditions—whether it be volatile economic markets or seasonal factors such as spring flooding or wildfires. Over the past year, the industry has been hit especially hard. Then this spring, as many operations were starting up, along came COVID-19.

Deemed an essential service early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, many forestry operations responded quickly to the crisis, developing safety protocols and modifying procedures to keep things running. In May, after the Province began lifting restrictions, other industries rejoined the economy. All employers in BC—whether they resumed their operations or they never stopped—were required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan and post it in their workplace. Work-SafeBC safety officers actively conducted

inspections and spoke with you about how you’ve assessed the risk of COVID-19 exposure at your workplace and what steps you’ve taken to keep workers safe.

You may have noticed that the step-by-step process to create your COVID-19 safety plan was similar to the process you’d go through to develop your work-site safe work procedures. It should have involved your workers, joint health and safety committee, and supervisors, and followed these steps:

1. Identify hazards and assess the risks at your workplace.
2. Implement measures to reduce the risk.
3. Develop policies.
4. Develop communication plans and provide training.
5. Monitor your workplace and update your plans as needed.

The risk assessment and mitigation processes you’ve used to keep your crews safe from COVID-19 are similar in principle to what you’d do to identify and mitigate all the other “everyday” health and safety risks in your operations.

Starting up safely

Preventing COVID-19 transmission has to be top-of-mind since we appear to be in this for the long haul. But we also have to be mindful of the need to assess and address risks that may arise from resuming operations after being paused due to the pandemic, seasonal factors, or other reasons. Make sure you provide safety orientation for new staff or refresher training for returning staff. It’s important to consider the impact of restarting machinery, tools, and equipment that may have been stopped when your operations paused.

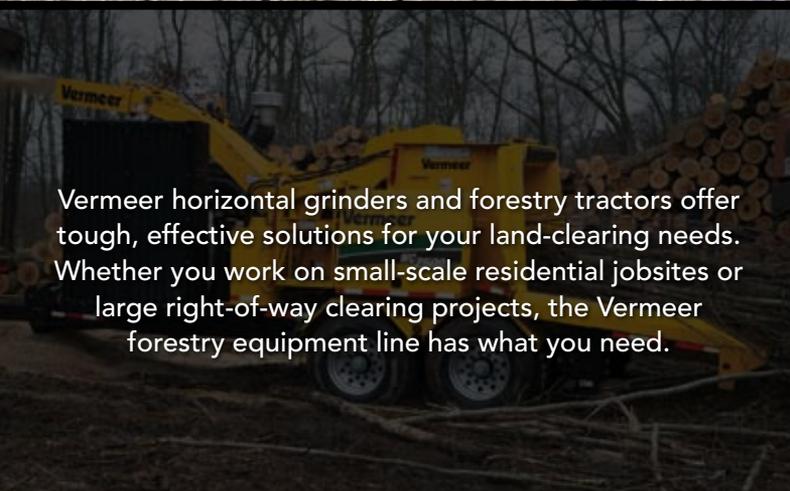


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Now is a good time to take it slow and give everyone enough time to adjust physically and mentally so they can do their jobs safely and properly. Supervisors should gauge how workers are adjusting to new routines and see whether they need any skills upgrades, or if they require more support and closer supervision. Quality supervision of workers is key to ensuring safety at your operations, but is particularly critical when restarting or when there's been a significant change. Ensure that effective communications are established early on and keep those communication lines open. Make sure everyone feels comfortable raising safety concerns.

Health and safety is a shared responsibility

Resuming operations is a good opportunity to remind everyone that workplace health and safety is a shared responsibility and all parties have an important role to play.

As an employer, you're responsible for the health and safety of your workers, and all other workers at your workplace. This involves having a system in place to

identify hazards, control risks, and monitor the effectiveness of controls you've implemented. You're also responsible for ensuring workers and others at the workplace are properly trained and understand safe work procedures.

Workers are responsible for protecting their own health and safety as well as the health and safety of others. This involves being alert to hazards and reporting them to their supervisor or to you, following safe work procedures, and using protective equipment and clothing properly. They're also responsible for not working while impaired or overly tired.

Forestry operations are often complex worksites involving work at various phases with multiple employers. Owners and/or prime contractors are responsible for the overall coordination of health and safety at the worksite. This includes proper planning and conducting the operations to avoid the development of dangerous conditions such as phase congestion and ensuring all the work can be done safely.

Without a doubt these are challenging times and we've all been affected in

different ways. Let's all do our part to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while maintaining a healthy and safe workplace.

Learn more

Learn more about assessing and controlling potential hazards and how to create a pandemic contingency plan at worksafebc.com. For resources on conducting forestry operations safely, visit worksafebc.com/forestry. Forestry is also the focus of one of WorkSafeBC's High Risk Strategies, which target industries with a high risk of serious workplace injury.

During this time, employers and workers are also expected to follow direction from the Public Health Officer. The BC Centre for Disease Control has collected essential information for employers and businesses on their website covid-19.bccdc.ca.[▲]

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Have you reviewed your health and safety plans?

Whether you're continuing or resuming your forestry operations, identify hazards, assess the risks and implement suitable controls.

Find out more at worksafebc.com/forestry

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