

Mike McKibbin

Mike McKibbin is one of more than 1300 registered independent fallers in BC. His story is positive one – 28 years with only ‘minimal’ injuries; a broken leg and a few sets of sutures.

According to McKibbin and the Workers’ Compensation Board (WCB), that’s unusual in this line of work. Every week, seven fallers in BC are injured, and in the five year period, 1998 – 2003, there were 26 fatalities with a total of 1400 injuries.

At 17, McKibbin was sent out by his crew foreman, near Port Alberni, BC, to learn from an experienced faller. “I was mentored and trained by an older, experienced guy. He had a pretty good handle on what the job of falling entailed and did a good job of getting me started safely”, says McKibbin.

However, McKibbin hasn’t seen that kind of mentoring for a long time. He believes safety has decreased over the past 20 years and says that proper training and the monitoring of new fallers has taken a tailspin.

About 4 years ago, McKibbin saw an opportunity to act and he began to speak out and organize on behalf of the Independent Fallers in BC. Today, he is one of the founding members and Chairman of the Western Fallers Association; a key supporter of the BC Faller Certification Program.

The Faller Certificate Program, designed by industry, labour, and the WCB, focuses on the knowledge, skills and abilities a faller requires to work safely. It requires mandatory testing and a demonstration of required skills.

The newly formed BC Forest Safety Council will register all certificated Fallers and implement the Program. Eventually, no one will be able to work in the forests of BC without certification.

“I like to think the Certification Program is going to help the Fallers feel a little more upbeat about their own well being and will remind the rest of the forest industry to be sure we have the acknowledgment and opportunity to conduct our job in a safe and orderly fashion. Falling is one of the most dangerous professions on the globe and should have had some form of certification attached to it years ago”.