

Backgrounder: Key results from WorkSafeBC's forest compliance strategy pilot

Cause for concern

B.C.'s forest industry is one of the most important economic drivers in the province, but it's also one of the most dangerous. There is a long history of severe accidents in the forest sector. Over the 10-year period between 1996 and 2005, 311 B.C. forestry workers lost their lives due to work-related causes — an average of 31 per year. Last year alone, WorkSafeBC accepted well over 5,000 wage-loss claims in the forestry sector and there were 49 accepted fatal claims — the highest number of deaths since 1988.*

Forestry compliance pilot results

To help improve health and safety in the forest industry, WorkSafeBC recently launched the pilot phase of a new forest compliance strategy — a program that involves all forestry stakeholders and that emphasizes shared responsibility and accountability for safety through education, consultation, and increased enforcement.

As part of the pilot program, WorkSafeBC officers conducted target inspections of 300 forestry worksites across the province during the first three months of the year. These were more than routine inspections. Besides covering specific safety regulatory issues, officers spent more time at the sites, addressing issues that many hadn't covered before at individual worksites (looking at whether local health and safety programs and plans were in place and functioning; examining appropriate levels of supervision, training, and planning; identifying who was accountable and responsible for site safety; etc.)

Key results from the pilot phase of the forest compliance strategy included:

- WorkSafeBC officers wrote a total of 603 safety orders during the pilot phase — compared to 343 orders during the same three month period in 2005.
- Inspections conducted during the pilot phase resulted in an average of 2.95 safety orders written per prime contractor, 2.41 orders written per sub-contractor, 1.33 orders written per licensee and 0.85 orders per owner.
- Multi-employer workplaces made up 87 percent of the forestry sites inspected, yet only 63 percent had written agreements designating prime contractor responsible for all health and safety on the site. Only 30 percent of sub-contractors had their health and safety programs reviewed by prime contractors.
- In many cases prime contractors had accepted safety responsibility without fully realizing what it meant and how they would be held accountable for overall safety of the worksite.
- 76 percent of workers interviewed at the inspected sites reported receiving effective training on the equipment they used or were working around; 83 percent of workers were supervised.

Year-to-date enforcement numbers

The following information breaks down WorkSafeBC's enforcement activity in the forestry sector from January 1 to May 20, 2006.

- 650 safety orders written
- 23 safety orders issued to workers
- 34 high-risk orders written
- 10 warning letters issued

Regional Breakdown:

Offices	Orders Written
Abbotsford	28
Courtenay	50
Cranbrook	9
Fort St. John	70
Kamloops	110
Kelowna	19
Nanaimo	50
Nelson	43
Prince George	231
Terrace	31
Victoria	9

Top 5 *Workers' Compensation Act* (WCA) orders written:

1. WCA 194 (Compliance reports) — 132 orders
2. WCA 115 (General duties of employers) — 60 orders
3. WCA 118 (Coordination at multiple-employer worksites) — 44 orders
4. WCA 119 (General duties of owner) — 17 orders
5. WCA 173 (Incidents that must be investigated) — 4 orders

Top 5 occupational health and safety (OHS) orders written:

1. OHS 26 (Forestry Operations) — 153 orders
2. OHS 3 (Rights and Responsibilities) — 83 orders
3. OHS 4 (General Conditions) — 68 orders
4. OHS 16 (Mobile Equipment) — 30 orders
5. OHS 10 (De-energization and Lockout) — 8 orders

Forestry claims (January 1 to April 30)

Between January 1 and April 30, 2006, WorkSafeBC has accepted 1590 claims from the forestry sector, including 5 fatal claims.* The breakdown by forestry subsector and classification unit is provided below:

Subsector/ classification unit	Number of disability and fatal claims accepted	Disability and fatal benefit costs	Days lost from work
Forestry (Subsector 7030)	330	\$16,537,078	31,343
Wood and Paper Products (Subsector 7140)	1163	\$16,389,410	43,035
Log Towing (classification unit 732024)	20	\$156,482	875
Log Hauling (classification unit 732044)	77	\$1,415,753	4,425
Total	1590	\$34,498,723	79,678

**Includes subsectors 7030 (forestry) and 7140 (Wood and Paper Products), as well as classification units 732024 (Log Towing) and 732044 (Log Hauling)*