

Licensees/owners: Are you planning and conducting your forestry operation to prevent phase congestion?

Forestry operations are often complex workplaces, with various phases of harvesting frequently occurring at the same time or in close sequence.

Even though a forestry worksite can be busy, make sure it's well-organized to ensure worker safety. Proper scheduling and planning of operations before the work starts are essential first steps to prevent phase congestion.

The BC Forest Safety Council defines phase congestion as “a situation where different logging phases — such as planning, falling, road construction, production or blasting, etc. — become bunched up or congested, with an increased risk of negatively affecting the productivity and safety of each phase, putting workers at higher risk of an upset or incident.”

Phase congestion can occur within one phase (for example, fallers working too closely together). It can also occur when different phases are too close together (for example, machinery working too close to fallers).

Phase congestion is unacceptable and poses a significant risk to worker safety. Everyone is responsible for safe work, from the licensee/owner through to each worker.

Responsibilities of licensees/owners

Health and safety in forestry workplaces is the responsibility of all workplace parties that have an influence on how work is conducted.

As a licensee/owner who has knowledge and control over workplace hazards, you could be held responsible during an inspection or if an accident occurs. Plan and conduct your overall operations to ensure work can be carried out in a safe manner.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, if you have control over an activity in a forestry operation, make sure the activity is planned and carried out in a way that's consistent with the Regulation and acceptable to WorkSafeBC.

Ensuring contractors plan and conduct their activities safely

As a licensee/owner, view all the activities related to timber harvesting, transportation, and forest management as your work — not just the work of the contractors and subcontractors. Similarly, all of the harvesting activities of a stump-to-dump contractor are considered to be your work as a licensee/owner, and not just that of the contractor.

The importance of planning

A worksite can become congested due to weather events, delays in phase completion, or other unforeseen circumstances. Have a plan to address these challenges in a timely manner so that worker safety isn't compromised.

As a licensee/owner, are you:

- Considering the work activities or conditions at the workplace during the planning phases to prevent all known or foreseeable risks to workers?
- Planning the timing and sequence of operations to ensure there is adequate distance between phases and workers?
- Amending plans when there is a change in the workplace that could create a known or foreseeable risk to workers?
- Ensuring that the prime contractor is qualified to manage the worksite effectively?
- Providing the prime contractor with the information necessary to identify, eliminate, or control hazards?
- Using qualified supervision to address and manage any issues with congestion on a day-to-day basis?
- Supporting the supervisors and workers with suitable alternatives if it comes to your attention that a worksite is congested?
- Evaluating the risks the operations of workers at one site within the licence area will impose on workers at another site?
(Where necessary, coordinate those activities in order to ensure that workers' health and safety is not put at risk.)
- Monitoring the operations of contractors to ensure they are:
 - Meeting their health and safety obligations
 - Monitoring the health and safety performance of their subcontractors

Preventing phase congestion is everyone's responsibility, from the licensee/owner to each and every worker. If you have questions, please contact your local WorkSafeBC prevention officer.

For more information

- Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, section 26.2, Planning and conducting a forestry operation (WorkSafeBC)
[worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com)
- Phase congestion (BC Forest Safety Council)
bcforestsafes.org/node/2615