

**Report on Contributing Factors to Faller  
Accidents in British Columbia  
And  
What Must Be Done to Bring Them Down**



**A View from the Field**

August 2005  
Western Fallers Association



**This Report is dedicated to  
the many BC Fallers  
who have died  
or have had their lives changed forever  
by crippling injuries  
while performing their jobs.**

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# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>About Western Fallers and This Report</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Falling, the Dismantling of Mother Nature -- Inherently Dangerous and Physically Demanding</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Man Made Hazards</b>	<b>8</b>
4.1	Overview	8
4.2	Road Building	8
4.3	Processing	12
4.4	Feller Bunchers	13
4.5	Bad Stacking Practices	15
4.6	Retention Falling	16
4.7	Single Stem Harvesting (SSH)	18
4.8	Uphill Falling	19
4.9	Helicopter Pads	20
<b>5</b>	<b>Policy and Regulation Breakdown</b>	<b>23</b>
5.1	Overview	23
5.2	Block Size	23
5.3	Boundary Lines and Block Layouts	24
5.4	Wildlife Tree Patches (WTP)	25
5.5	Fisheries	26
5.6	Retention Falling and Single Stem Harvesting	27
5.7	Feathered or Retained Edges	27
5.8	Corridor Falling	28
5.9	Cutting Permits	29
5.10	Stumpage Bingo	29
<b>6</b>	<b>Production Pressures, the ‘Push’</b>	<b>30</b>
6.1	Overview	30
6.2	The Cost of Being Safe must be taken into account	30
6.3	Cutting Permits	32
6.4	Stumpage Bingo	33
6.5	Shortage of Fallers	33
6.6	Poor or No Planning	34
6.7	Deliberate Congestion	35
<b>7</b>	<b>Naturally Occurring Hazards</b>	<b>36</b>
7.1	Overview	36
7.2	Blow Down (Large Areas)	37
7.3	Sporadic Blow Down	39
7.4	Related Ground Conditions	40
7.5	Loose Rock	40

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7.6	Cliffs and Excessively Steep Ground .....	40
7.7	Excessive Snowfalls .....	41
7.8	Heavy Rainfalls .....	42
7.9	Snags .....	43
7.10	Excessive Heat .....	44
<b>8</b>	<b>Mandatory Radios.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Distractions and Added Stress .....</b>	<b>47</b>
9.1	Overview .....	47
9.2	Independent Faller, the One Man Company.....	48
9.3	Faller vs. Faller.....	49
9.4	Fallers and Certification .....	50
9.5	Length of Contracts .....	51
9.6	The Walking Wounded .....	51
9.7	Non Compliance from Those around Us.....	52
9.8	Delinquent Pay Periods .....	54
9.9	Fatigue.....	55
<b>10</b>	<b>Fallers Certification (The Fallers Take on the Concept).....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Attitudes and Accountability.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Terminology.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>73</b>
14.1	APPENDIX A .....	73
14.2	APPENDIX B .....	74
14.3	APPENDIX C .....	75

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Thanks to Wayne Hansen, a Master Driller and Blaster for his valued thoughts and comments.

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# 1 About Western Fallers and This Report

The Western Fallers Association (WFA) is a relatively young organization. Our Board of Directors and membership are made up of active Fallers in the Province of British Columbia.

We came into being in 2001 to give the independent contract falling community a voice over an issue we were having with the Workers' Compensation Board of BC concerning the assessment rate structure for our members.

Though we predominately represent independent Fallers, a lot of the concerns that we have with regards to health, safety and our general well-being as Fallers is directly applicable to unionized company Fallers as well. Many of our members at one time carried a union card.

When it comes to manually falling timber as part of a forestry operation, a Faller is a Faller.

During the early talks that went on between Industry, WCB and the Fallers, one thing that was agreed upon by everyone was this -- Fallers get hurt a lot and are proportionally involved in more fatalities than just about any other occupation on the planet. There were charts, graphs and documentation openly indicating that we have been involved in a lot of carnage over the last 75 years and that not much had changed, and it didn't look like it was about to.

As various Task Forces were convened, meetings took place and correspondence was circulated, we did announce more than once that the Fallers themselves definitely had something to say about their own well-being. After all, we are the ones getting hurt and packing our buddies out of the bush on stretchers.

You see, whenever there was an accident involving one of us, the blame if there was going to be any, seemed to most always end up on the shoulders of the Faller that got hurt. We always maintained that there have been many other contributing factors leading up to these injuries and fatalities and we better start looking at these. Nobody seemed too interested in hearing what we had to say, until now.

When the BC Forest Safety Council had a special meeting to deal with a number of fatalities, including three Fallers being taken out, we "volunteered" to produce a report done by Fallers, but we would need some support to get it done. So the Council agreed to support putting the report out and they have. I wonder if they will ever regret that decision.

What follows is the working Fallers' take on what is truly going on out there and what, if anything, can be done about it. We don't pull any punches and try to "tell it as it is" both positively and, when we need to, put the blame where it should be. This is what the Forest Safety Council asked for and this is what we are giving them.

## 2 Introduction

Between 1995 and the production of this document in mid 2005 there have been 58 Fallers killed performing their job. Along with these tragic fatalities that have occurred over this short time span, many good men have had their lives changed forever from crippling accidents. Considering there are only a few thousand Fallers operating at any given time in the Province of British Columbia, the odds of being killed or injured has deemed their occupation as one of the most deadly on the globe.

This report has been compiled to openly identify any and all contributing factors as to why Fallers get injured on such a regular basis. It doesn't contain a lot of charts and graphs usually attached to reports of this kind. The Workers' Compensation Board has all sorts of those which are readily available to anyone who requests them. If you contacted someone in 'Industry Services' at the WCB, I'm sure they would be more than willing to help you out. What is contained in this report is our "on the ground" experience.

Without a doubt, some of the things we have chosen to identify have been going on so long now they are simply taken for granted and it is the assumption of the companies and the Bullbuckers and, yes even the Fallers, that we will just dive right in and deal with them, even though we risk becoming another statistic.

Along with bringing these contributing factors to everyone's attention, we want to make things better. Wherever possible or practical, we have listed recommendations or best practices to assist in getting the Fallers in and out of the bush safely on a daily basis.

We put out a request to the WFA membership to lend a hand with this project. What we received back over the course of the last month (and there was a lot) is what this report has been structured on. My point here is that we are not talking about ancient history. The practices documented and the problems identified are recent. **These have been and continue to be current contributing factors to Fallers being hurt and killed!**

Any of the recommendations and best practices that we have followed up with have been drawn out of the Forest Industry itself. There are still a few outfits doing the right things to help ensure that their Fallers get out of the bush after each shift. Our hats go off to you guys! You know who you are! If everyone was like you, this report would not be necessary. We need to hold you guys up as examples to show that falling can be done effectively without injury. We need more of you, not less.

Some of the content of the report may appear, to anyone not familiar with the sector, to be pretty far fetched and something that came right out of the Third World. It didn't. It is happening right here in BC. To make the report credible, we supplied as many photos as we could. And these are not "old" photos. They have all been taken recently.

A lot of the unsafe conditions the Fallers seem to find themselves in are also quite frustrating to us. You look at the man made hazards that we are expected to crawl around in; well make no mistake, it's a complete hindrance to our production also. We know everybody understands that word, "production". When conditions are not safe, it means we don't get as much done as we could or should.

Also, in the back of this report you'll find an appendix containing some sections and regulations taken right out of the *Workers Compensation Act* and Regulations. The ones we have taken the time to note are, without a doubt, being broken on a regular basis at many logging operations through out BC. As you read through this and come to the end anyone will be able to pick up on that, this is why we listed them there.

There will tend to be some repetition and cross referencing take place as this document unfolds. This couldn't really be helped. It's not designed to bore its readers, it will be the same problem that crops up under a different heading and, who knows, maybe it will help to drive a point home if the same topic is brought forward several times.

This report is going to have something for everybody to take action on. To bring the faller accident rates down it is going to take a concerted effort starting at absolute top with the Provincial government, right through the Forest Sector and ending at the Faller on the stump.

Although we have been quite aggressive with identifying some factors, in no way shape or form, were they intended to start 'finger pointing'. We know we're going to hit some nerves here, but quite frankly, we're not trying to make friends or win any popularity contests, we're trying to get the fallers home safely on a daily basis.

We'll touch on a few topics here that while they do have to do with the unnecessary stress load many of us are working under; the true benefactors from cleaning up and dealing with these situations are going to be the other workers that end up working close to us. We like to see those guys get home each night also.

As you read through this there will be reference to one person (I, me). That's me, Mike McKibbin. In terms of me, I've been a Faller throughout BC for 30 years and have witnessed first hand what is going on out there. I'm currently the Chairman of the Western Fallers Association. All interviews where needed, the processing and compiling of information as well as the rough draft of this report were done by me.

It fell to me to pull together all of the experience and work on the ground of the many men who helped with the report. So, the report is in my voice, but I am speaking for the whole group.

The information presented in this document came from the Fallers themselves. When we think back on all the Fallers that got involved in the consultation process to put this document together, the man-years of falling experience in BC would top out at over 1,000. We asked for help from our membership and we got it! Any photos that are used were taken in the last three months except the ones used for the second chapter, some of those were classics from the last decade. We feel that these details alone make this the most credible compilation of its kind ever.

Some items that are about to be identified in this report have already been brought forward and documented by the Forest Safety Task Force in their publication in early 2004. The main difference between what they had to say and what we are saying is that our concerns are faller-specific. Our organization would like to think that this will aid to confirm that what the Task Force identified is definitely something that has to be addressed and the sooner, the better.

Anyway folks, let's get on with it, enjoy!



### 3 Falling, the Dismantling of Mother Nature -- Inherently Dangerous and Physically Demanding

This seems like the most fitting place to start.

The Fallers for the most part are the first ones to enter a logging setting and get things under way after the Layout people (Engineers) have done their thing and the permits have been cleared.

In years gone by it was always recognized that some of the things that good ol' Mother Nature had left behind on some of these blocks in the form of blow down, excessive rains up rooting timber, hang ups, snags and rotten trees, along with working on some ground that even extreme hikers wouldn't be caught dead on, were all part of the job description of a Faller.



**Whether 'crippling' up a tree so the machinery can finish the buck or leaned right out getting an undercut put in a large tree, one slight miscalculation on the Faller's part and he could be hurt bad.**

A Faller could be out on any given day working in what anyone would classify as reasonable ground, lose his footing through some moss into some twisted roots and bang, end up with a broken ankle or knee, just like that. There is no getting away from the fact that the job of falling is a physically demanding, inherently dangerous occupation. By just having to go out and dismantle what has naturally taken place in the forests of BC in order to get things ready for the rest of a logging operation to get underway is a proven task in itself. And yes, in many, many cases Mother Nature has proven to be quite unforgiving when it comes to us, the Fallers.

On any given day, a Faller is reasonably weighted down from the time he leaves the crummy until his day is over. Just to give you an idea, here's what we head into the bush with:

- 1 can of gas ..... 20 lbs
- 1 jug of chain oil ..... 10 lbs
- Lunch and tool pack..... 20 lbs

You reach your 'face' where you drop this stuff off and pack your tools for the rest of the day:

- 1 saw with bar and chain ..... 22 lbs
- 1 wedge belt ..... 10 lbs
- 1 axe ..... 5 lbs



**Soon as a Faller leaves the Crummy in the morning he has some form of weight attached to him until he returns at night.**

Packing these weights on a daily basis is part of our general job description; could they be classified as contributing factors, most certainly, but there won't be much timber hitting the ground without any of the aforementioned gear. It will become evident further along why we've listed this. The weights are accurate, if anything, they're a little on the conservative side.

Just to get the timber knocked down, laid out and bucked up (where applicable) in a safe, orderly fashion takes a lot of skill and hard work. You'll find us out performing our job in any range of weather conditions from blistering hot to bitterly cold. We happily go out in torrential rains which can soak a guy through to the skin within an hour or put our

snowshoes on and tramp around day after day in the deep snow country of our fine province; it's all part of the job.



**Getting around, conducting everyday business is an 'extreme' chore for a Faller.**

Without any doubt, weather conditions could be listed as a contributing factor to Fallers' accidents, but there's no real getting away from that one. What are we going to do, park in camp and wait for the skies to part and the sun to come out, I don't think so. We're not a bunch of 'fair weather workers'. We've lightly touched on what we go through on a daily basis as a Faller. The items mentioned are part of our job, we've learned to expect this and deal with these situations.

We hear and read about our accidents being all preventable and targets of zero accidents being set. **On behalf of the Falling community, let's set the records straight! While these targets that have been identified all sound absolutely great, they will prove to be unobtainable, given the nature of the beast, falling.** Don't any of you get disillusioned with that last phrase; it's just the reality of it all. Now, what can be done is take the contents of this document very seriously, put it to task and we'll personally guarantee a noticeable drop in Faller accident rates, it can't be helped.

What we're going to do now is take you through a list of contributing factors that are without a doubt, injuring us. We as Fallers are put in these situations repeatedly that for the most part are right out of our hands. They've been created in a lot of cases by another facet of log harvesting. Over the years it has been drilled into our minds by Bullbuckers, Woods Foremen or Company Quality Control with absolutely no true concept of what our job entails, that dealing with these matters are part of a Faller's job description. Are they?



# 4 Man Made Hazards

## 4.1 Overview

Because this chapter is about to bring forward all factors contributing to the Fallers being injured that are being created by another person throughout a harvesting operation, we presume that they can be dealt with the easiest. If another person is creating problems, let's get him to stop!

Seems simple enough, doesn't it? There are WCB regulations in place that are very clear that directly relate to some of the items we are about to cover. This in itself is evidence that we are not out of line here asking you to straighten out these situations that we repeatedly find ourselves in.

We deal with the following in this section:

- Road Building
- Processing
- Feller Bunchers
- Bad Stacking Practices
- Retention Falling
- Single Stem Harvesting
- Uphill Falling
- Helicopter Pads

## 4.2 Road Building

When we look at some of the Right of Way (RoW) allowances that have been laid out to access some areas of timber, there is no doubt in our minds, it was impossible for the road builders to keep debris out of our quarters on the low side of the road. Fallers can accept this.



**The road that was installed where these two trees got brutally damaged was on level ground, this was NOT necessary!**

Now what is happening to the point of pandemic proportions is we are working amongst things that plainly no man should have to, on a far too regular basis, and we have the



broken bones to prove this. This is what has to take place in order to collectively deal with this matter.

#### **4.2.1 Faller**

If you are the person doing the hiring, make sure you have a qualified man for the job. RoW falling is no place for a trainee.

If you are the Faller being hired, don't pull anyone's leg. Until you have been at it for a while, your going to have troubles picking your natural openings, the lean of the timber and in short, keeping the brush and full length trees out of the area below the cut allowance. If you have to get your openings going by ballooning trees straight down into the standing timber, you are not a RoW Faller and you shouldn't be doing this kind of work.

Think about it, you could be the one that gets the quarter you just created that mess in. It is Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) with some outfits still to this day that only their most experienced Fallers will go on RoW jobs. This has to be brought back to all road building jobs.

#### **4.2.2 Excavators**

The next process to take place in road construction is the moving in of equipment, hoes, cats and drills. This is where the injury causing debris begins to get right out of hand for Fallers. When the back-hoes followed us up the cut, the SOP for picking up the felled wood and piling stumps and debris was that everything would be all neatly piled to the low side of the RoW waiting for the arrival of the processing crew, a pile of logs, a pile of rubbish, a pile of logs and so on. **There still are construction crews practicing this method.**

**Logs, roots and debris being hurled into our quarters have gotten to the point of pandemic proportions, literally everyone is doing it and nobody seems to care.**

Now, what the other 95% are doing is barrelling on through and hurling just about everything down into our quarters. We did a controlled experiment not that long ago, here's how it panned out.

There were two of us cutting RoW. Each night when we walked out it was quite evident that just about everything we felled the days before was ending up thrown down in the standing timber. We entered in to the block and got into some completely flat going where we proceeded to cut twice as



wide as a normal road allowance, about 200 feet. This made absolutely no difference with where this operator put things; he just hurled stuff harder and farther.

When we questioned him as to why he did this and brought it to his attention that we felt there was no need for it and that a Faller would eventually have to work in all the crap and corruption he'd been throwing down there, his reply was "Well, I hadn't given it much thought, I'll try and pay a little bit better attention." OK., chalk that one up to blatant ignorance and inconsideration. By the way, things never changed with this operator.

There truly appears to be a difference in the attitudes or skills of equipment operators. We see it where there has been more than one working on a stretch of road. One section will be a complete disaster, while 300 feet down the line where another operator took over, things will be neat and tidy. In many cases, the neater of the two had a harder piece of road to deal with. It seems to all stem on the individual operator.

### ***4.2.3 Drilling and Blasting***

Without a doubt we definitely find ourselves in a lot of devastation created by blasting. There are stretches of grade that are built where the load side of the road looks like it has been hit by a bomb. Is NATO using the woodlands of BC to practice bombing runs?



**We asked the Drilling crew 'what happened here'? The response we got was they were told to do this to avoid the costs of end hauling, blow 'er over the bank. What was management thinking?**

We took it upon ourselves to interview, Wayne Hansen, the owner of a reputable blasting outfit up on the North Coast. We've been working around this crew for years now, and though the odd boulder does end up down over the bank, things are pretty much contained to the actual road allowance. What are these guys doing that many Drillers aren't? Wayne made it quite clear right off the hop that some of the rock we find ourselves waddling around in couldn't have been prevented, no matter who was doing the blasting, a lot of things are site specific. He went on to say that most of the driller/blasters shortly after they were ticketed were quite capable of keeping things contained, they got messy over the years, and they lost their pride in what they were doing. So long as no one brought things to their attention, they just kept overloading the shots, kept the heading moving forward and collected their pay cheques. Proper supervision would curtail this from happening. Even though his crews are doing better than most, he admitted that he does keep on everyone to keep up the quality.

It was brought to our attention also that some of the rock we were finding ourselves in may have been bailed over the side purposely by a hoe or cat and blamed on the Blasters. It turns out that the fines an outfit can get from Forestry are automatic for equipment owners and operators for unnecessary side casting, where as a blaster losing a shot here and there would be looked at a little closer and possibly with no action being taken. I found this in itself to be a very interesting point.

Communications have been noted to not take place between the driller and blaster properly causing over loaded holes therefore blowing everything to kingdom come. How is a blaster to know how to load the holes proportionately if the driller hasn't indicated how hard the rock is?

#### **4.2.4 Cats**

Bring on the bulldozers to smooth things out and get some drivable grade built. As with the hoe and drills, make an effort to keep the material on the grade; don't push it over the bank into a Faller's quarter. If there is too much material to put to task, coordinate an end haul program to load the stuff up into a dump truck, pack it away and dump it anywhere but where someone else has to work.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR ROAD BUILDERS WITH REGARDS TO FALLERS**

These recommendations are already in effect in some areas; let's get everyone reading off this page when it comes to road building!

- **Everyone do their part to keep unnecessary debris out of the low side of the road.** There are WCB regulations in place stating not to create hazards while building roads; start following these routinely. There should be automatic penalties for blatantly breaking these rules. Make sure the Fallers and operators are all working to keep those quarters clean.
- **Licensees as well as BC Timber Sales,** you have to ensure that these low sides aren't getting out of hand, just because the job has been farmed out. You have the responsibility to know what's happening on your land. If you've been assuming that people know what the regulations are, then stop making that assumption. Many of them don't. Don't count on the responsibility of safe work procedures taking place, because, in a lot of cases, they're not. When the measure up for pay is taking place, have a look. If things appear undesirable, take action to have it remedied before a Faller has to go down into it. If you don't have anybody to go have a look, then hire someone.
- **Grade Foreman and Owners,** get the hoe to clean up the messes that have been made before he leaves the site. Pull stuff back out of the timber into the opening. If economics are involved, deal with it! Don't have the drillers purposely blow a section of end haul over the bank to avoid costs. You're violating environmental regulations here also. Make sure everyone is capable of doing their job with safety in mind; remember what we said, logs, brush, logs, brush all piled in the opening. How will you know if the ground is sanitary enough? Would you mind working down there if you were a Faller?

## 4.3 Processing

We've got the road in place and the next operation to get underway is the processing of the RoW wood.



**It wasn't long ago that situations like these were not tolerated; now we see sites like these everywhere**

This is where the buckler or processor, if one is being used, as well as a loader and trucks show up to get these logs headed to the mill or log dump. As this process takes place, as with the hoe operators, an unacceptable amount of debris is getting hurled right back down through the Faller's quarter instead of being piled back up in the opening. Loader men, this is your responsibility, let's stop doing this! The safety conscience operators pull the log piles apart, get what's merchantable out of them, then re-pile the rubbish in the opening between the road and the standing timber either on an already started pile of roots and tops or right back where the log deck was.

This, we like to think, is a simple enough task to ask of the loader men, some have been and continue to do this on a daily basis. Let's get all of them reading off this page.

Now, as a loader man that is truly looking after the well-being of his Faller buddies we may call upon you and your machine services when consideration to the Fallers well-being has broken right down with the road crew and they have moved on to another job 200 miles away.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS ON PROCESSING**

Here are some things that you can do:

- When you are loading out a RoW, pay attention to what that low side looks like. If there is anything you can do in the way of tidying things up for the Fallers, take the initiative to do it.
- Take a log in your grapple, knock any blown off tops and limbs from the construction down, settling them on the ground. Any small damaged trees and hang ups you see flatten them out. How will you know things are good? We're all human, would you feel alright about working below where you just passed.
- **Management, ensure an effort has been made to keep the worksite safe.** The way things sit to date with these bunged up low sides of the road is this. Management in a lot of cases flat out expects their Fallers to get in there and knock the timber down without any effort being made to sanitize things.

- When we refuse to or bring these things at least to their attention, we are intimidated by them and told flimsy excuses why things are the way they are, which is bloody unsafe.
- **This has got to stop as of right now.** If there has been neglect right up to the point your Faller is wading around in this stuff, shut him down and get him out of there until a loader can be brought back in to contend with the man-made messes.
- The Fallers have always been expected to make things safe for the equipment and crews coming in behind them, let's see some of that go the other way. Yes, this will possibly add to the overhead, but as we have indicated, there were opportunities during construction or loading that were missed to prevent your Fallers being put in this situation, and as a boss you should have taken them.

#### 4.4 Feller Bunchers

You cannot deny that a feller-buncher is truly a marvel of man's ingenuity. They've been around for years through the Interior and are making quite an appearance on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland currently in the stands of second growth and smaller diameter first growth in the high country.

When used for their proper application, which is to cut, grab and pile or place the tree into lead for logging, they are great. Yes, there's been a vendetta between these machines and the Fallers going on for years, simply because the bunchers do get the better going with the Fallers doing the steeper ground, etc.

There's no getting around that one, it's purely a fact of life. With other occupations technological advances have been made to make things safer for the workforce. In the case of bunchers and Fallers, the machines are making the hazard situation worse for the man on the ground.

Where we are running into real problems is the Fallers are finding themselves all too often wading around in debris and hazards created by these machines. Lots of times to slow down the fall of a tree to reduce breakage, the buncherman will purposely send it into the standing timber, creating any number of hazards that would not have been present before this practice was exercised.

We noticed through our review of the WCB regulations that there didn't appear to be much in place that was buncher specific. There's one regulation mentioning something about manufacturers' specifications for slope and another about leaving cut up trees and that's it.

What we see taking place in many instances is these machines are taking trees that are beyond what they were designed for, creating hazards brought on by loss of or absolutely no control during the falling process in which the Fallers are injuring themselves.

We took it upon ourselves to contact a very helpful person out of the sales department for Madill in Nanaimo. Madill was recommended to us as building a big, very versatile buncher for the Forest Industry, although we're certain any other manufacturer would say the same about their product. The machine we were discussing was a Madill 3200. We

asked a couple of very straightforward questions with regards to the capabilities of their machine.

**Question:** “What are the slope limitations for the 3200?”

**Answer:** “You can safely get around on 50-60%; we recommend not taking them over this.

**Question:** “How big a tree can they controllably deal with, cut, grab and place?”

**Answer:** “With our own Madill saw head you can go up to a 24 inch butt, we can put another manufacturer’s head on which would enable you to cut and bunch up to 26 inches”.

There you have it, if you have a buncher on ground steeper than 60% in timber with a larger butt diameter than 26” you have exceeded the manufacturer’s recommendations for what this machine was designed to do. Because these recommendations are being openly abused by the people that have purchased these machines, the Fallers are once again finding themselves working amongst man-made hazards in the form of unnecessary brush, broken off limbs and tops as well as hang ups.

Many times, what we encounter as Fallers working around bunchers is that the Operator has gotten his opening started by taking the timber and putting it through the areas of hand fall wood. Whenever we have had the opportunity to question an operator on these bad practices, it appears they were unaware of what they were causing. When given a bit of a blast on an individual basis, they seem to remedy the problem.

Now, where things have really run amok in many cases is with what Industry has come to call ‘directional falling’ with bunchers.

This is where the buncher is in timber larger than it should be. It will make a series of cuts around the base of the tree to cripple it up, position itself to one side and give it a push to get it to fall over. Because the tree was not properly cut up and the buncher may not have been able to position itself in the greatest spot to push, that tree is out of control and will land somewhere within an eighty degree swath, which is not very accurate. In many instances these out of control trees are landing right in our quarters. The only thing directional about this method of falling is the buncher can get things moving more or less away from itself. **This must stop, right now!**

If this was the amount of accuracy and control a Faller could demonstrate when taking his Certification exam, he’d flunk, right there, no question about it. The reason he’d fail is because he’s endangering himself as well as the people around him.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUNCHERS**

- Whether you are the Operator, Woods Foreman, Licensee or Contractor, stop using your machine for anything other than what they have been designed and built for. We had no problem obtaining the manufacturer’s recommendations for properly using them and have chosen to share these with you. When the opening is being put in place, don’t pile your trees into the Fallers’ areas. This does not have to happen.

- If this train of thought just doesn't fit your current way of doing things and you just can't bring yourself operate your Buncher in a safe, responsible fashion, here's the contingency plan. Clean up all the brushed in timber before expecting your Faller to go in and finish falling the trees left standing. This has been the proven method for years through the Interior when the Fallers would go back in to do the oversize. The bunched wood had been skidded out and while this process was taking place, the skidder would tidy any debris left around the base of the trees up with its blade.

Because a lot of the shows nowadays will be forwarding with hoes and loaders, as you are 'chucking' the wood out, use the same procedure to sanitize the hand fall trees here as with the bombed-out low sides of the road we discussed earlier.

Grab a log and knock those hanging limbs, broken tops and hang ups that can be reached down and clean out around the base of the trees in question. If neither of what we have suggested is going to work for you, how about reversing the order of how you go about getting the timber felled. Let the Fallers lose first, then do the mechanical falling afterwards. Even if there has been hazards created by the Fallers, there's a lot of steel protecting an operator from broken off limbs as opposed to a plastic hard hat protecting us.

- And for the WCB, you need to give some guidance on when and how these machines can be used. They are out of control because there is nothing substantial in place that says they have to be! The WCB needs to give clearer direction on how these big and expensive pieces of equipment can be used and what will happen if they are used improperly.

## **4.5 Bad Stacking Practices**

What we have going on here is what is known as stacking your Fallers. This is where the Fallers are started in layers going up a side hill and in many cases you end up with Fallers creating hazards for Fallers.

The reasons for doing this are many and why this happens will be brought forward a little later on. Stacking us isn't anything new, and in some cases works quite fine. Fallers can end up stacked on both Helicopter jobs as well as conventional shows. Where we have a complete breakdown is where this can successfully be done in a safe, sensible way and where it never should have been considered.

While species of wood can dictate somewhat as to where your Fallers can safely be stacked, slope and general lay of the land are the main determining factors of whether or not you should consider stacking workers on top of workers and currently, there doesn't appear to be a whole lot of consideration going on in these departments. Getting an opening in place for a Faller can be task all in itself, limbs get broken off and we do lose the odd tree over the line unintentionally, it happens. Now with this stacking, those limbs and lost trees have just taken place in another Faller's quarter. As the ground gets steeper, the task gets more difficult to the point of being impossible. What we end up with is Fallers losing trees on steep ground, which turn into torpedoes and end up in the poor guy's quarter coming up from below him. We've witnessed trees build up such a

head of steam, they get going through one Faller's felled and bucked wood, enter another Faller's standing timber below, roar through there and right out into the lower guy's felled wood. And yes, this all took place with another man working in the patch that just had the tree rocket through it. Russian roulette at its best!

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STACKING FALLERS**

- Unless you are working on a level grade, we're going to suggest that you just plain don't stack the Fallers any more. This would be the safest, most sensible approach.
- Not going to work for you? Ok, how about we incorporate a maximum slope of 30% that Fallers shall be stacked in the Province of BC. Even at this gentle a grade, the potential for 'runaways' is still there, particularly when the sap's running early in the season.
- Make sure your Fallers are qualified; it's all about holding your timber up and keeping it out of the quarter below.

## **4.6 Retention Falling**

The message here is pretty clear: **If ever there was an example of Policy overlap and Regulatory breakdown, here we have it folks, retention logging.**

Retention falling has been called selective harvesting as well as 'search and destroy' by some of the Fallers. It involves going into a site and falling a target species and grade of tree while leaving the remainder of the stand more or less in tact. The reasons for carrying on this form of logging are economics, get the good stuff and leave the less valuable behind along with environmental and visual impact reasons. For obvious reasons the companies and environmental groups stand behind and support this very dangerous form of work.

When a Faller puts a day in retention falling, he is jeopardizing his health and well-being on an hourly basis. We spend each and every day firing timber through standing trees. You get limbs and tops hurled back at you along with creating hazards that you as a Faller have to get right under in order to buck or fall the next tree. To be a successful retention faller, we have to break numerous WCB regulations on a daily basis that have been put in place for Faller safety, it cannot be avoided.





**A Faller is never really out from under the canopy working in a safe opening when doing retention work.**

**Currently, WCB's way of dealing with things is they chose to not visit these sites until there's been another crippling accident involving one of us.** When WCB and the Fallers come together for a meeting over one of these accidents that have just taken place, the Board will give us a talk on SOP and Safe Practices, the Fallers all bob their heads in agreement, WCB goes home, the Fallers head back to their tools, nothing has changed! Retention falling will not permit this.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RETENTION FALLING**

- **Stop doing this:** This issue had to be one of the hardest to come up with and present something sensible far as recommending safe work practices. **In all honesty, the only substantial option there was to preventing accidents to Fallers involved in this method of harvesting would be to shut retention harvesting right down.**
- The Fallers know it's dangerous, WCB knows it's dangerous, so what's the problem? Though we have just presented the most logical solution, by popular vote, we may not be able to fully support this for the plain and simple reason retention logging creates some form of employment where there may have been none.
- This is just like saying "Who cares if it's going to kill you, shut up and be thankful you've got a job." Sorry Fallers, I told you this wasn't an easy one.
- **And if you can't stop:** Alright, after many hours of consultation with Fallers who have been around retention falling, here's what we came up with.
- **Once again, use only qualified Fallers,** the guys who have been cutting RoW etc., who have an exceptional handle on keeping their wood under control when knocking it down.

- **Extra qualification for retention logging:** The suggestion of an ‘Advanced Fallers Course’ to compliment the Faller Certification already being implemented was brought forward to us. This is not a bad idea. We consulted with a credible retention bullbucker, over the idea of hiring Fallers with X amount of year’s experience. His feelings on that matter were that it should be site specific, meaning it has to be up to management to ensure the Faller that has been hired is up to the job of retention falling. He’s seen Fallers with 3-4 years experience shine as opposed to a man with 15-20.
- **Economics can not be an issue on these jobs,** pay these Fallers what they are worth. They have tripled their possibilities of being injured and are willing to go out and break rules and regulations in order to fulfil the prescribed method by Forestry. When submitting or accepting bids, make sure there is enough money available to contend with the falling of non-merchantable timber and snags in order to ensure a safe job is being done. Contractors, Primes and Licensees, show some responsibility in this department when hiring a Falling Contractor.

We presume the profit margin is set big enough by the fact you are creaming out the forests, spread some of the wealth around. Some of the outfits we find ourselves working for have already abolished any ‘per meter contracts’ altogether. Contracts are settled by the man day; these Employers recognize what the Fallers are up against with retention falling and are willing to shoulder the financial burden in order to see the Fallers conduct themselves safely as possible in a daily unsafe situation. Kudos to you guys! Retention work is still bloody dangerous, none the less.

## 4.7 Single Stem Harvesting (SSH)

Here’s another one of these ‘new age’ logging techniques that once again, has us scratching our heads as to why this is even being permitted to go on.

All too often the Fallers find themselves wading around in brush and debris with many overhead hazards created by this method of logging. Why?

**Once again we find ourselves recommending the most logical thing to do would be shut this method of harvesting right down and once again, economics will dictate this recommendation to be unviable, so let’s go to the next best thing.**

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SINGLE STEM HARVESTING

- **Planning in advance to keep your Fallers out of excessive debris created by this method of harvesting** was repeatedly suggested to us from the men who have been hurt doing it. It will be up to management to ensure everything possible has been done to keep us out of hazards that have been created along the way.

- **Expecting the Fallers to put their day in working amongst all the debris created by SSH must stop.** Through our consultation process we learned that there has indeed been SOP's developed by some very credible people, which, do to one reason or another, are no longer being followed. A remedy for the current situation may be as simple as getting back on track with those recommendations already set out.

Many of our own members who have been around SSH felt that though there was room for much needed improvement safety wise, things could be salvaged. Where applicable, get the Loaders/ Hoes back in to the single stems to harvest/ sanitize things. If what it's going to take is to have the Bullbucker and possibly a helper literally going out ahead of the production Fallers to make certain these remaining trees can be easily accessed, as well as cut and hand bomb the limbs and tops away from the butts, do it! Your Faller is weighted down with all his tools, more than likely under pressure to produce, don't take it for granted that he's going to want to spend the day swimming around in brush tracking these remaining trees down and falling them. Where applicable, reverse the order of falling; go get these target trees first if you plan to bunch the rest.

## 4.8 Uphill Falling

Something that we are being asked to do by Industry as Fallers is direct the fall of our timber up slope.

The reason for doing this is to cut down on the amount of breakage when the tree hits the ground. This method of falling was already experimented with by MacMillan Bloedel and their Fallers some years back. The conclusion was gravity, which none of us has control over, dictates that the tree itself along with who knows what else will come back down the hill and could very well injure Fallers.



**The Faller that supplied this shot said to me “You’d never want to let WCB see this picture”. I replied that there was an outfit or two exercising this very practice and it appeared the WCB was quite fine with it, and yes, everyone seems to be wondering why we are getting hurt.**

The conclusion of this pilot program, method was condemned and shelved due to safety reasons. There is an outfit that shall remain nameless in this report that has taken this form of falling off the shelf and is having their men attempt it again.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UP SLOPE FALLING**

- **This form of falling must be condemned and stopped.** The reason for it being unacceptable in years gone by (gravity) still exists currently. We have a good man lying in a hospital bed broken up from this form of falling while the writing of this report is taking place that shouldn't be there.

The BC Faller Training Standard clearly says that no tree shall be felled more than 15 degrees off level on slopes greater than 45 degrees. This rule must be strictly adhered to by all of Industry; it is the feelings of our organization that there has been adequate leniency displayed by WCB's working group that built the Standard with regards to this matter. There can't be any more broken bones traded for broken wood.

There are several things the Fallers have been doing for years to minimize wood breakage, here they are for consideration. Make sure your Faller is qualified, not just a guy with a chainsaw.

True Fallers, given the opportunity, can keep their timber off the stumps. The use of cribbing; this entails falling the non-merchantable wood, snags and saplings out of lead with the timber falling and laying the valuable tree out on top. Keep the stumps where applicable right down to ground level. Where this can't be done, pad the stumps protruding up in the direction of the next tree to be felled. No, we won't be wrapping foam pads around them; you'll be taking angled cuts from the top of the stump to the ground with the saw bar running perpendicular to the lay of the tree.

This method is a little more time consuming but it has been proven effective in minimizing breakage both to the wood and the Faller.

## **4.9 Helicopter Pads**

The opening up and construction of helicopter pads for use by the Fallers, rigging crews and visits from various other entities is another area of concern for us.

In many cases after the opening has been established and the pad is in place, the surrounding area where a Faller will find himself working eventually has once again been loaded up with hazards in the form of brush, broken off limbs, uprooted timber and hang ups that weren't there before construction began. As with anything else we've brought to your attention so far, there are pads which get put in place without any man-made messes being created and those that no Faller should be put to work in. There is some ground where these things had to be installed that is truly rough and keeping things tidy was probably impossible.

Ah yes, another day in the woodlands of BC Chalk, this one up to a very poorly built pad. The tail of this helicopter is hanging over a 200 foot cliff. Nobody was hurt, the bull cooks logged some overtime that evening scrubbing the urine stains out of the seats.



The pads were put there because of safe working distances or because that was the only available place in the case of steep, rough ground; we can live with this, I suppose. We tracked down a semi-retired Faller, who has a proven track record for getting these pads built without creating a whole lot of hazards. This Faller has successfully put hundreds of helicopter pads together throughout BC. Many of us have used them and had to work around them. These recommendations have come out of that interview.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HELI-PADS

- **Qualified Faller:** Make sure the Faller building your pads is qualified, with a good eye for natural openings and the skills and attitude for keeping things clean. Sometimes the company bullbucker isn't going to fit this bill; a Faller off the crew will have to be chosen for this detail. When working on a clear cut, take your initial openings for the first pads on the block right to the boundary line where applicable, either installations close to the bottom of the setting or a side line. If you are going to need an extra day to achieve this, so be it.
- This can be applied to retention blocks also, **fall the target trees out below the pad location.** Use natural openings wherever possible. On a clear cut use your opening created by the cut itself. Have your Faller work up to a prospective site; install a pad, paying attention to what is above it in order to not wipe the pad out the next day by a run away. **Have help available when the final construction begins, some of the material to be used will have a fair bit of weight to it.** These stringers etcetera can be hard on a guy's back. Time factors cannot be an issue, don't rush the opening by making it too small or having to balloon the

timber making a mess. Ensure there are enough pads situated on a Helicopter job to keep travel time down in the event of an emergency.

So ends the chapter on the man-made hazards that we find ourselves as Fallers in all too often.

There are more, but these were the ones which the members of the WFA repeatedly identified as contributing factors to our accidents. Now, many of you that have read this far are probably asking the question:

**“Why, if you as Fallers are getting hurt by Industry’s sloppy antics, do you even work in all that unnecessary debris?”**

Keep reading; that will be answered a little further on in a very clear and decisive manner.

# 5 Policy and Regulation Breakdown

## 5.1 Overview

This chapter will deal with a few of the Government agencies, their policies and regulations and the obvious negative effects they are having on a Faller's safety and well-being.

We believe the Forest Safety Task Force has identified some of these problems, calling it 'Regulation Overlap'; you can be the judge of that. **Regardless of what you want to call it, we have decisions that are being made throughout different levels of the Provincial government that clearly indicate there has been no consideration given to the Faller being able to safely carry out some of the things that are being asked of us and yes, some of these decisions can be traced right to our deaths and accidents.**

The 'overlap' takes place predominately between how WCB dictates we safely go about our job as Fallers and what the agency in question has prescribed us to do to stay within the boundaries of their policies. For the most part they are two very separate things; this is why we have chosen to identify them as 'breakdowns'.

There are issues here that should have been posted in the Manmade Hazards chapter for the plain and simple reason the Faller is creating hazards for himself in order to follow the prescribed method of harvesting dictated by one agency or another. It can't be helped.

In this Chapter we look at the following:

- Block Size
- Boundary Lines and Block Layouts
- Wildlife Tree Patches
- Fisheries
- Retention Falling
- Single Stem Harvesting
- Feathered or Retained Edges
- Corridor Falling
- Cutting Permits, and
- Stumpage Bingo.

## 5.2 Block Size

In many cases the cut blocks over the years have continued to shrink in size to the point that they are no longer realistically safe for us to conduct our job in them anymore. We're presuming this is done in many cases to keep environmental groups happy with

regards to visual impact and so on. What ever the reasons may be, these small blocks have got to be addressed. For us, bigger is safer.

Think about it, we are asked to fall 200 foot timber into a 300 foot opening from one side to the other, remembering that no tops or limbs can fall outside the boundaries or you are liable for a fine from Forestry. This is a proven impossibility to do this safely! A Faller can't help but end up bucking below the work he has already performed and quite possibly being steam rolled over by one of his own logs.

This shouldn't be complicated. Just do the math! Working in these small patch cuts also increases the wear and tear on a human torso through excessive wedging to get the timber to fall back into the opening as well as far too many trips up and down with your tools, chasing the wood to buck.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Abandon the practice of laying out postage stamp size settings; they are hazardous to anyone that has to work on them. If this doesn't work for you, always keep in mind that your Faller's work load has been increased many times by having to contend with these small blocks, production will drop, it's inevitable. Give us some room to move.

### **5.3 Boundary Lines and Block Layouts**

Over the years the boundary lines for cut blocks have continued to get so broken up and uneven that they have reached the point that some of these bottom lines are totally undoable no matter what, never mind open them up safely. The reasons for these bent up lines for the most part is the engineers have been programmed to chase timber for the Forest Industry; if there's one nice tree 50 feet down a steep bank, right out of whack with the line they've been running, they'll drop down and ribbon it in. As with the tiny settings, gravity, slope and the length of the tree will dictate that it will be an impossibility to safely fall these trees and keep them within the setting.

Remember, if things land outside the block, the Faller could be liable to the MOF. We questioned an engineer over this practice stating that they are ribboning things out that are clearly impossible for us to fall in some cases. The reply we got back for the most part went as follows. "We know you can't get some of those trees, but if we leave X amount over here due to you guys not being able to fall them, we can apply for X amount over there in our next undertaking to make up for what had to be left standing." Right, if that makes any sense.

Side lines for the most part will be fairly straight forward, keeping in mind that the timber leaning outside the block along the edge will require one of three things. If lean allows, these can be wedged or jacked back into the setting. There is extra work involved, appreciate what your Faller is going through to get these trees for you. Not really with in the limits of wedging, they can be forty-fived, angled in using gravity to help. These trees will land somewhere in the setting and should be left tree length, keeping the Faller from working out in the middle of his own felled and bucked. Some species are more brittle or rotten than others and will neither wedge or be pulled successfully back into the setting, leave them standing.



Let's discuss back lines now. In the event the back line is now laid out with high points, the timber will have to be ballooned. They are more than likely going to run, ending up in the F+B, don't have your Fallers chasing these, once again it is dangerous to have your Faller out in the middle of his own work. Because we have gotten right up into the high country with our logging blocks, we are finding many settings stopping at the base of cliffs. The timber runs out and the ground goes vertical. This last pass of trees in many cases is loaded up with an extremely large volume of natural hazards in the form of blow down, fall down, boulders and rock damaged trees. Many injuries and deaths (as recently as a month and a half ago) have taken place in this zone. In a lot of cases, this last pass of trees also leans upslope, into the cliff requiring extra time and effort to get them to fall back into the setting. Are these few remaining trees actually worth the Fallers dying over?

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BLOCK LAY OUT**

- **Start straightening out the lines, trees land from 100 feet and upwards in a straight line.** Stop chasing timber that can't be felled anyway, in many cases you are playing some kind of unnecessary stumpage swapping game that is contributing to Faller accidents.

Where the timber is bottoming out on vertical cliffs, serious consideration should be given to pulling the top line back into the timber to avoid Fallers having to work in the death zone created by stuff coming down off these cliffs over the years.

The engineers could play an extremely important role with the initial identification of hazards throughout a block, they literally walk ever inch of these areas anyway, let's get them trained to keep an eye out for precarious situations and have them documented on our maps. It would help the Fallers by giving them a heads up in advance of what they may find in their quarters. As part of the training program to become a Forestry Engineer, it should be mandatory that the students get out on some active logging sites to view what is actually taking place during a harvesting operation and learn what works best and what should be avoided during block lay outs.

- Management, keep in mind, the more bent up the boundary lines appear on the map, the harder a time your Faller is going to have accomplishing his job properly. He will be doing his best at what could be a near impossibility to do safely and productively.

### **5.4 Wildlife Tree Patches (WTP)**

There are no more blocks laid out that will not have a few WTP's attached to them. These have been justified with the concept of having somewhere for woodland birds and mammals to have a place to rest and reside. Without a doubt, keeping the critters in mind is a noble gesture. When these first started to pop up some years back, they seemed to be more or less isolated to the block boundary lines, adding to uneven lines we have already covered.

Over time the Forest Industry in all its wisdom has decided to arrange these things anywhere within the block boundaries to cut out non-merchantable timber. Well yes, we now have our WTP, serving two purposes instead of one, but there has been no consideration given as to what it will entail to safely and productively fall around these. The Fallers now have a combination of all the extra hazards already mentioned in this chapter right out in the middle of a perfectly good, safe opening.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WILDLIFE TREE PATCHES**

- Even though in a lot of cases the Faller will like the fact he doesn't have to spend the entire day cutting rubbish because the engineers have left it for the squirrels, these patches should be located around the outskirts of the cut block. Chances are the lines have many jogs and kinks in them anyway; you may as well keep going with that program.

## **5.5 Fisheries**

There is not much to report on this topic. The Fallers have been working successfully around fish habitat for years. Keep up the good work men! There has been an effort through the Agencies involved to actually pull lines further back from fish streams to make our job less stressful. Thanks to those involved.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FALLING AROUND FISH STREAMS**

Whenever the Fallers find themselves working around fish habitat, the timber is generally big, valuable and leaning right into the creek or river. This translates into a huge amount of extra work involved to get the timber felled back away from the waterways.

- **Qualified Faller:** Make sure once again you have the right Faller for the job. Many contractors have timber tippers or adequate jacks for doing this type of falling. Trying to wedge some of these behemoth trees will literally knock the stuffing out of your Fallers.



**When the falling of oversized timber is taking place under extra ordinary circumstances, make sure your Fallers have proper jacks.**

- **The right equipment:** Management, get with the program and be sure your Fallers have been supplied with the specified gear. An excessive amount of wedging creates unnecessary wear and tear on hands, wrists, elbows, shoulders and backs (RSI). Bear in mind that this type of falling requires extra time and care. As with everything mentioned in this chapter, management has to be aware of this.

## 5.6 Retention Falling and Single Stem Harvesting

Both these are caught up in regulatory breakdown for us as Fallers. We feel we have covered both these topics sufficiently in the man-made hazards chapter.

**Whose rules do we follow? Why were these techniques approved without considering the safety hazards involved? How does this work when the “normal practice” is in direct violation of WCB regulations? Who’s not paying attention?**

## 5.7 Feathered or Retained Edges

Here we have another prescription that has come out of Forestry, bringing environmental concerns instead of Faller safety to the forefront. Well this may have had good intentions with respect to cutting down on site degradation around the edges of our settings, it definitely has no consideration for Faller safety in order to fulfil its obligations. A retained edge involves leaving a buffer strip in some areas between the clear cut and the boundary line where only the merchantable timber will be felled out into the setting. A popular prescription will read, ‘leave all trees eight inches and under standing’. A two foot on the butt cedar tree will ride right up on an eight inch hemlock tree causing it to kick back at a Faller.

WCB has been documented for putting the kybosh on some of these jobs that the Fallers were attempting to do this and putting their life on the line while doing so. It’s been our observation that where this method of doing things is being used on grapple yarder settings, the trees end up being flattened out by the yarding procedure anyway. What you’re left with is now is a hole where the tree was uprooted for water to collect, more than likely causing more damage in the form of soil erosion than if it had been cut down so the log could have been harvested over a stump instead of a small standing tree.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RETAINED EDGES

- **Let’s scrap this idea.** As mentioned, in many cases, these retained edges are not working anyway. .
- **But if we continue:** Now, in keeping in sync with trying to accommodate Industry as well as get the Fallers out of the bush unscathed, we could lean toward site specific, with Fallers safety being our predominate concern. Leave it up to the Faller, if he has to get 10 or 15 small trees out of the way to safely fall a merchantable one, so be it.

This add on to the logging prescription must be documented in plain English on both the block maps and the logging plan so everyone is reading off the same

page to avoid conflict between the Faller who wants to stay alive and the Woods Foreman who feels the logging prescription must be followed at all costs.

## 5.8 Corridor Falling

This is another method of falling and harvesting that has come into play in the last 5-6 years, promoted by environmental agencies for visual impact reasons. We will acknowledge that this form of logging has created employment where there would have been none (e.g. Clayquot Sound). It involves cutting a narrow strip, usually 45-50 feet wide up the side hill, then retention falling both edges into it. The Fallers have been doing this form of falling and been getting hurt at it since its inception.



As with so many of our 'new age' logging techniques, corridor falling also has the Fallers working in their own man-made hazards.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRIDOR FALLING

- **Stop it:** As with several other methods we have identified, this means of harvesting should be put to rest. We know that a bunch of sign-packing hippies drawing negative international exposure to the Industry will not permit this. The fact that there is an added amount of extra dangerous work involved to successfully accomplish this prescribed method has to be acknowledged by all parties over and above the Faller himself. He is putting himself at risk to give everyone else up the chain some logs.
- **If it continues:** Economics have to be factored in to the equation; don't have us out there doing this form of falling for clear cut pricing. Where we have had to balloon large trees straight down the hill to establish the opening, management

has to come to terms that some of this will have to be left un-bucked due to safety reasons.

## **5.9 Cutting Permits**

We will take just a few lines in this chapter to mention the untimely fashion which the Province seems to free up cutting permits. Part of the justification by our current Government for tearing up the Forest Practices Code and replacing it with the *Forest Range Practices Act* (FRPA) was to shorten up the ‘red tape’ and have these permits flowing more freely.

Because the stalling of permits was identified in the sales pitch for the FRPA, we know this problem has been going on a long time. The FRPA has been implemented for some time now, but nothing seems to have changed in a lot of areas. The hold up in cutting permits being released from MOF in a free flowing timely manner is definitely another contributing factor to our accidents and fatalities. Now, it’s been identified. We will cover this problem more appropriately in a following chapter (the ‘Push’) where it will fit better.

## **5.10 Stumpage Bingo**

Here we have yet another problem to contend with as a Faller.

Stumpage Bingo as it has come to be called is when the forestry workforce is being held back from going to work in anticipation of stumpage rates being reduced. Although it has proven frustrating, it only stands to reason a forest company will hold its crews back if they know they will have to pay lower stumpage rates if they wait a month to start cutting timber. Consider this one more identified contributing factor (the Push) for the Province’s Fallers.

Our colleagues at both the Interior Logging Association and the Central Interior Logging Association have done a tremendous amount of work in identifying this problem and working to have it addressed by the powers that be. The WFA stands behind our Interior colleagues 100% with their efforts to have the Stumpage Bingo problem rectified. It’s a safety concern for all of us. Hopefully the Ministry of Forests will understand this.

## 6 Production Pressures, the 'Push'

### 6.1 Overview

Many logging shows in British Columbia are running on inhumane time frames to get the work done. If there was ever an occupation that a worker should not be made to hasten through, it's ours -- falling. **The pressure to get more done or the 'Push' as it's come to be termed, could very well be the number one contributing factor to Fallers accidents in BC.**

These pressures to get more wood on the ground can be traced back to many different origins. There have been many things openly identified so far in this report that are injuring Fallers. Now compound any one (or all for that matter) of those onto a Faller, weighted down with his gear and having to put his day in, head down, flat out, literally running from tree to tree. You have created a perfect situation for a fatality or accident.

### 6.2 The Cost of Being Safe must be taken into account

There is no time allotted to assess the multitude of dangerous situations encountered through a Faller's day, as well as the man having to cut every corner imaginable to get that next tree on the ground and bucked up.

#### **"I Can Do It Cheaper", the Bidding Process**

The negative impact on Fallers' lives as well as the drain on Industry's accident fund with WCB that these five little words have had is truly staggering. It will ensure that the Faller that blurts this phrase out does get the job or contract, and there will be an isolated financial gain for the prime contractor, but there are no wins for the rest of us. The Fallers working under the situation created by absolute low ball bidding will be forced to push it too the limits, both ergonomically and safely, that is a fact.

There are the other hazards that will have been created for other workers coming up behind the Fallers, in the form of unbucked wood and jack-strawn messes by Fallers, that must be considered also.

We can have two separate outfits operating in the same valley, one crew is conducting business in a safe, orderly fashion, with the men being paid well, the other one is documenting accidents every second day, running their Fallers into the dirt! This in itself is strong evidence that things do not have to be this way.

Where a lot of this problem starts is we have non-Fallers bidding on falling contracts. The Primes, in many cases, don't have the foggiest notion of what it will take to fall a setting of timber and yet they will submit X amount of dollars in their bid for the falling costs. This number will prove to be impossible for the Fallers to meet safely; the only option left will be to start running and cutting every corner imaginable.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BIDS**

- **Collective Responsibility for Pricing:** There can be responsibility shown by all parties involved in the bidding process from the licence holders clear on through

to the Fallers to abolish all forms of piece rate falling. In this day and age, the two most popular forms of contractual falling are price per cubic meter or falling by the acre.

Many times this price is offered on a take it or leave it basis and has been formulated by a person that knows somewhere in the range of very little to absolutely nothing about Falling. We must acknowledge that there are Bill 13 Contracts that are truly fair to the Falling Contractor; this being the case voids our first recommendation. These contracts have taken into consideration the bad ground, unmerchantable wood or slow going due to fish streams etcetera.

- **All Fallers are not created equal:** The current contract bidding system all too often is set with the top 10% of the Fallers in BC in mind. We have some younger, very talented, powerful men in our occupation who without a doubt are high producers, but what about the remaining 80+ percent of us? We hear of the ‘aging workforce’ repeatedly, well, Fallers age too, and at a more rapid rate, given the task they have been performing over the years. When submitting or accepting bids, consideration must be given as to whether or not the whole crew of Fallers can safely do the job being asked of them with an acceptable amount of impact taking place on their systems. Even the young guys who get out and give ‘er day after day are going to be beaten down at an early age, this is a fact.
- **Avoid the “trickle-down”:** There is another problem with this bidding business which leads to the unnecessary ‘Push’ being put on us causing our accidents that we are going to bring to everyone’s attention. Skimming of what money is available. It’s been our observation that a Licensee may be making adequate funds available to ensure a proper job is being done by the Fallers.

By the time the money passes through the hands of the prime and a falling contractor both screaming poverty, there doesn’t seem to be enough left over for the guys doing the work. OK, here’s a win-win situation (for some) to contend with that. In the case of the independents, they can negotiate directly with the owner of the timber, knocking out several sets of hands in the pot. We’ve all been forced into running these ridiculous little one man companies anyway; let’s get a little extra use out of them. Extra administration costs would be minimal (tally up the days per man, multiply the rate, add GST).

We have no EI weeks, holiday pay, separation slips etcetera to deal with, and excessive wear and tear on the Secretary would be minimal. Even after a company bullbucker was hired and paid, a few pick ups supplied one way or another, you would find there is easily enough money kicking around to pay for these added items, pay the Fallers properly and increase the license holder’s profit margin. There would be added savings with less broken wood being made also. If this is what it has come to, Industry should take a serious look at implementing this strategy.

- **Try this:** One method that is in place now with a few Primes and Falling Contractors is contracts are settled by the man day. X amount of dollars available

for every day one Faller works. Hey, a Faller still has to get out and work, we realize that, but the business of being run into the ground, chasing the next cubic meter or acre is eliminated.

Those Primes are also getting the job done properly; the wood is laid out with minimal breakage and bucked up by the Faller. There are added profits to be made for the Logging Contractor when it comes time to do the yarding, processing and loading as all these departments will run safely at higher production rates because the Faller's had enough time to do his job properly.

Once again, you can anticipate less breakage contributing to more volume being recovered over the ground they have to log over anyway. We recommend this form of bidding.

- **The cost of being safe has to be taken into account:** Economics and our 'new age logging' methods must be brought forward and addressed also. Any one of these methods (corridor, retention, single stem, etc.) that have been mentioned are far more dangerous and time consuming for a Faller as opposed to the good old method of clear-cutting. In many cases, there has not been a sufficient, if any, rate increase to accommodate for this, causing Fallers to once again start having to run at a dead gate, cutting every corner he can just to make a wage.

### 6.3 Cutting Permits

This problem was already acknowledged in the previous chapter. How the stall on permits coming out adds to the 'Push' being put on the Fallers is this. The people we work for like to get going after a winter or break up shut down, as do the rest of the crew waiting to come in behind the Fallers. Generally the first permits after a scheduled shut down are in place, things will tend to be alright for start up. The Fallers get going a month in advance to get ahead of equipment, usually we're under the gun but things work out. Where we have system failure is the camp is up and running, things are hair straight back, the Fallers mop up one block, get ready to go to the next and boom, no cutting permits, the Fallers go home until the permits come through. During this down time for the Fallers, operations don't cease. By the time the permits are freed up, you already have yarding crews looking for their next endeavour. Because management doesn't want to send men home for fear of losing them on top of the fact they just made the financial outlay to get things up and running for start up, the only other alternative is crack the whip and get those Fallers running.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PERMITS

- This problem must be recognized by the Ministry of Forests that it is indeed contributing to Faller accidents and be dealt with accordingly by them. Either that or the people we work for are going to have to come to terms with it through added planning and not take a disruption with permit flow out on the Fallers.

Whatever it is going to take, it's not our fault, and we wanted to stay working just like anyone else when we got shipped home for two weeks because the cutting



permits ran out. Someone in the upper reaches of the bureaucracy has to ensure that these permits are available to our employers in an orderly fashion.

## **6.4 Stumpage Bingo**

The fact that this is a problem with the 'Push' being put on the Fallers must not be denied. We identified what this is already for you and acknowledged that work is being done to rectify the current situation. By remedying the hold ups created by 'Stumpage Bingo', it only stands to eliminate one form of production pressures being put on the entire Forestry workforce. Thanks again, Wayne and Roy for the work you've done!

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUMPAGE BINGO**

Smooth out the current rate structure system. Eliminate the adjustment that takes place causing the Licensees to hold back sending the crews out to work because they will have to pay less stumpage if they wait until the rates are lowered. Shut the Bingo Hall down!

This will stretch out the work season, taking one more form of the 'Push' off the Fallers as well as the whole log harvesting sectors shoulders. This will also aid in keeping the dangerous worksite congestion at a minimum that causes us to pay too much attention looking out for the other guy instead of keeping our minds on the job. It adds to unnecessary stress levels that are already running rampant with us.

## **6.5 Shortage of Fallers**

There are many reasons an outfit may end up short staffed for Fallers. Here the Fallers find themselves in a real confusing situation, if the outfit we're working for is already short on men, common sense should dictate that they be looking after the ones they do have on site a little bit better to avoid losing one more to accident and injury. Not in our case, the machinery wants to get going which translates into those Fallers that are present being pushed to produce beyond all reasonable expectations to get the timber knocked down.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SHORTAGE OF FALLERS**

How does anyone expect us to actually come up with some logical recommendations on this one? This, without a doubt is everyone else's problem but the Fallers. Our observations tell us that approximately every four years the Forest Industry has a real booster year; everyone is working to beat the band. Because of the current structure of things, it's only natural that there won't be enough Fallers to go around. We can not help this, stop trying to get 2 man days worth of work out of one man. If your operation is unstable to start with and counts on having the transient group of us to tap into to do your falling, you're going to come up short of man power. The Forest Industry in general has made this a very unappealing occupation to enter into. Every 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> year there will be a shortage of fallers and you'll have to make do with what you can get. Don't bleed the Fallers you do acquire dry.

Now here are a few isolated problems which may be causing a logging operation to come up short when there are an abundance of us around, which is most of the time these days. Get what you want out of this.

- You and your outfit are known bad actors in the Faller community; your company has been black listed by us for this reason. Solution: Deal with whatever the reason may be that has tainted your name with us. Fire the Bullbucker, Woods Foreman, obstinate son etcetera that is plaguing your outfit's respectability. Go public with an announcement, the men will return to work for you.
- You are cheap. The Fallers know they will not even make enough money to cover the overheads they will incur by going to work at your job. You are known for this and avoided. This is a no-brainer, start paying accordingly, the word will circulate, and good Fallers will once again put you on their contact list to phone when they are looking for employment.

There's a couple of reasons you could be coming up short for Fallers, whatever the reason for being short staffed, it's not our fault, don't disrespect the Fallers you do have by putting pressures to produce on them to make up for your shortfalls. If one of the Fallers you have acquired becomes involved in a fatality, you have only added to the problem we are identifying in this section.

Savvy?

## 6.6 Poor or No Planning

How many times do we roll into a place to start work and it is evident right from the time we step off the boat, plane or whatever got you to camp that you just hired on to yet another 'Gong Show'. Oh, the operation has a plan alright, you'll openly hear announced, "The plan is we have no plan". The only thing really engraved in stone as far as planning goes is a start up date (which could already be bollixed due to permits not showing up) and an anticipated date of completion based on the volume of wood the outfit plans to get off the setting.

There is a huge void in the middle with respect to just what it is going to take to achieve the time period allotted. This complete lack of organization will inevitably end up in many cases with the 'Push' being applied to the Fallers to get the show on track and keep it there. Poor planning will also lead directly to congested work sites, where in order to operate at safe standards, someone is going to have to go home, interrupting smooth production levels.

Each logging site has to have a plan, this plan has got to take worker safety and well-being into consideration, not have the attitude of 'whatever it takes to get the job done, just do it'. Here's what's working currently at operations that are running safely with optimum production levels.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFE PLANS

- **Start at the top:** The good plans will begin in some cases with the actual owner of the company, driving out to the next setting on his company's docket, lacing up a pair of caulk boots and spending the day out in the field having a good look. This is where a workable plan could start.
- **Know the block:** The next best thing is when falling commences, both the Woods Foreman and the Bullbucker take a day and walk the whole block together with a

map, having a look and taking notes. Hazard identification can be taking place at this point also. Make a plan, keeping in mind timeframes to let the Fallers as well as the entire crew safely undergo their part of the job. Inform the owner at the office on what they have come to agreement on. The Fallers along with the entire crew must be made aware of any and all plans that have been made through safety/production meetings. These should happen on a regular basis, everyone has to be reading off the same page.

Decisions and plans that are made to achieve a successful and efficient operation can not come from the seat of a pickup truck. Always factor in 'Murphy's Law', especially in this day and age. When plan 'A' breaks down, rip it up and initiate another to safely achieve your goals. Don't just crack the whip on your Fallers, expecting them to shoulder the burden when things wander off track. Keep everyone informed when things change. Communications between the Owner-Woods Foreman-Bullbucker-Fallers-Operators and related ground crews must be kept wide open and up to date.

**Good planning by knowledgeable management is a key preventative measure to avoiding the unnecessary push being applied to Fallers.**

## **6.7 Deliberate Congestion**

This is when a logging contractor will purposely start up the harvesting equipment (grapple yarders, hoes, helicopters, etc.) on a site too close to the Fallers knowing that the concerns of being 'caught' by the equipment are riding on the Fallers minds causing them to push it to the limits in an attempt to put some safe operating distance between themselves and the equipment. This tactic has been a SOP for years with some outfits in BC. It's only the real slime balls that will do this, but make no mistake it is going on. It will guarantee those contractors have their Fallers running at a dead gate once again and that they will get their falling done dirt cheap.

Why do you think they're doing it? The frustrating part about this one is it can always be conveniently hidden under some other reasons such as permit disruptions (we'll find out after the fact the company was sitting on the permits for six weeks prior to this taking place), the snow's going to bury yesterday's falling (even though the sky is clear and the satellite shots show no storms on the horizon) or the owner heard the earth is going to end next month and he wants to get all his wood scaled by the mill so we can get paid before that happens.

There always seems to be a legitimate excuse to have the Fallers running through their work instead of being given an acceptable amount of time to assess things.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DELIBERATE CONGESTION**

- **Weed out the Bad Actors:** Locate and shut these outfits down that do this! They've been getting away with murder at everyone's expense but their own. We know who some of these Primes are, if anyone else who reads this would like to know, contact the WFA. We'd be happy to make a few of the bad actors famous.

## 7 Naturally Occurring Hazards



A Faller comes across and contends with situations like these daily. Hang ups made naturally are dangerous to dismantle, never mind many of the other situations we seem to find ourselves in the middle of.

### 7.1 Overview

This chapter compliments chapter 3 of this report on the general duties of a Faller. It will identify many things that the Fallers are involved in routinely in the form of ground, weather and conditions caused by weather such as blow down, which could quite easily be ranked in the top three contributing factors for Faller accidents. Do we expect these to just vanish so we don't find ourselves having to work under the conditions that have been made due to natural causes? Absolutely not.

They have all been around for years and the Fallers have been contending with them, many times unsuccessfully, for years. The form of hazards created by blow down have been amplified for the simple reason previous cut blocks have allowed the wind to knock over entire stands of timber adjacent to them, the more blocks we have opened up over time, the more blow down has been created. We are well aware that some species (cedar), even after years of lying on the ground, are valuable.

**There must be acknowledgement by the non-fallers (quality control personnel, MOF staff, woods foremen to name a few), that in some cases, these high value trees lying**

**around through our quarters might have to be left unbucked by us as a Faller could very well end up under them, dead.**

We consider the following:

- Area Blow Down
- Sporadic Blow Down
- Related Ground Conditions
- Loose Rock
- Cliffs and Excessively Steep Ground
- Excessive Snowfalls
- Heavy Rainfalls
- Snags
- Excessive Heat

## **7.2 Blow Down (Large Areas)**

When these large areas are first located by the MOF or a company and identified to be harvested through the Salvage System, consideration must be given in the form of 'is this humanly possible' right off the hop! The Fallers have been dazzling the people we work for over the years by getting all these patches bucked up, but there has been a huge amount of blood shed in the process. Before one ribbon is hung, here are some recommendations that must be considered and adopted.

- Slope, the steeper the grade, obviously the more hazardous the patch will be to deal with. Don't even consider putting us on vertical cliffs any more, bucking acres of blow down, we've had enough of that.
- Did this patch all blow down in one direction, rather than being a jack-strawn mess?
- The direction of the lay. Did Mother Nature conveniently blow this patch over side hill to the lead or straight up and down? The latter two being far more dangerous for the Faller contend with.
- Is the patch even going to be economically viable, are you about send a Faller in to salvage five merchantable trees after he's had to buck up a ten acres worth of hazardous trash? Is the bulk of this patch already unsalvageable due to excessive breakage or rot?
- Has this patch had at least one year to settle, both a winter's snow load and time will take a lot of the spring out of the trees.

The WFA stands noted that the people (engineers) that could truly put these five points to task would be in need of some kind of advanced training to develop an eye for picking these situations out. We would be willing to work with the MOF and educational

institutions to develop an add on to the current curriculum being offered at colleges and universities for forestry engineers.

If these simple points had been followed over the years during the very early stages of planning, Industry would have had many less Faller accidents. One other thing to consider, if the patch is truly suicidal, but you just have to have those five Cypress trees mixed in amongst the mess, can some repositioning be done with whatever form of equipment is being used, making things actually doable for the Faller. This will be explained in further detail.



**Here's a prime patch of blow down to have your Faller and Loader work in together. It has to be harvested anyway; production and safety will be at optimums.**

There are many perfect patches of blow down to be salvaged throughout the Interior. Ground inclination is perfect, it looks like it has been laid out by a very talented Faller, it's thick giving high volume return for ground coverage, and the Fallers always end up bucking these patches up in the winter when there has been four feet of snow dumped upon them. Because the blanket of snow has obscured accurate vision over 75+% of our blow down patch, it's an impossibility to buck everything up properly, never mind safely. Fallers are getting smacked around and equipment operators are getting upset because the snow load would not permit getting to the bottom half of the pile leaving them stranded in amongst a bunch of un-bucked trees.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PATCHES OF BLOW DOWN**

- **Wait a Year:** Make certain the area has been down for at least a year to allow some of the spring to naturally be taken out of the trees. There are about to be multiple situations to deal with here, which once again have all been tested and proven to be safety efficient and cost effective. You've got to like that!

- Wherever possible, turn your Fallers loose before the patch gets covered in snow. He can see what he is bucking on and will be able to do a thorough job. Where winter harvesting conditions are mandatory in order for roads to be usable or to cut down on negative site impact, get your Fallers in to these sites ahead of the snowy season (planning in advance).

This has to be done particularly on grapple yarder or helicopter shows. Don't make the Faller wait nine months until harvesting has taken place to be paid either. We could see that one coming down the pipe.

- **Work Together:** When Ground Based Systems (GBS) are in effect, if the 'no snow' rule couldn't be exercised, get your Faller, complete with radio and headset, and the chosen piece of harvesting equipment, complete with radio to work safely together. This is another win-win way of doing things. The machine pulls the mess apart and systematically lays it out to buck the roots off so as not to expose the Faller to any catastrophic surprises. The equipment will be able to proceed through the patch accordingly because nothing has been missed. Maximum production and recovery will be achieved.

### 7.3 Sporadic Blow Down

Quarters have had pieces of blow down or natural fall down through them since the dawn of time. The safe bucking up of these obstacles almost deserves a journal or report all on its own, given the multitude of different situations the Fallers find this stuff in. Bucking blow down will be site specific depending on many things that just got mentioned as well as the individual Faller qualifications. The BC Faller Training Standard covers blow down formally and following the guidelines presented in that publication will help to enable a Faller to successfully cut up and walk away from most pieces a guys going to encounter. Let's cover some extreme situations as well as openly explaining why the Fallers are getting terminated all too often by blow down.



**Getting situations such as this cut up and safely on the ground must become everyone's priority. The Fallers can do this, just give us the time so we don't end up with something like this on our heads!**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUCKING SPORADIC BLOW DOWN (AND WALKING AWAY FROM IT)**

It has been drilled into our heads by management, quality control and the rigging crews that as a Faller every stick of blow down must be bucked. **From here on in, the judgement call on this will be left up to the Faller!** We know it can bugger up the

yarding and we know that the outfit may go broke if it doesn't get to harvest that one nice cedar laying straight down the hill. The Fallers should not have to die for those two reasons. The bucking of blow down will go concurrently with the face going up the hill. When the root wad is successfully removed from the trunk, under no circumstances should the Faller end up beneath it, bucking more wood. If timber lands beneath these things as falling proceeds, leave them! **In the event of over-sized wood, reposition the trees to a safe area with the yarder or helicopter, then buck them.** Though not a standard practice with WCB, we will recommend using a rigging buck where applicable, just to keep all parties happy and keep the Faller from exposing himself to unnecessary dangers. Keep in mind that the fresher the piece, even though it is blown over, it will still have roots holding it in place. This could cause it to flop back over to the position it was in when it was a standing tree. For this reason, all workers must stay out of the divot in the earth. The real ancient ones have nothing, the roots are long since rotted away, and when the trunk has been disconnected the root wad could roll downhill at any unscheduled moment.

## **7.4 Related Ground Conditions**

No one seems to be in denial that the ground the Fallers find themselves working on has become considerably rougher and steeper and just look at how ass-backwards our way of thinking is. Many of the other high risk occupations such as war and bomb disposal units have come up with innovations to help protect people involved with those occupations. All the Forest Industry managed to come up with relating to the Faller's avenue of work is the feller-buncher, which is going to guarantee the Fallers never see hospitable ground again. "Come on Fallers, let's get you up on those cliffs now, I'll keep my machine down here on the gentle slopes where things are safer." This report has been hard to keep cynicism out of, trust me!

## **7.5 Loose Rock**

Loose rock can show up in any corner of the Province. We've been breaking ankles and legs on it for some time now. Because we are bi-pedal, Fallers do get around on the stuff, even with the weight of our gear on (chapter 3), provided we are given the opportunity.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOOSE ROCK**

- Crawling around on loose rock, falling timber is not a walk in the park. If production pressures, as previously discussed, are being applied to the Faller in any way, shape or form, they must be eliminated at once. The Faller will be involved in an accident if he has to run. This form of ground is very unstable for footing and can cause ankle roll-over by just passively walking on it. As an added note, hook-tenders will have a difficult time getting around with blocks and straps on this ground also; bear that in mind, management!

## **7.6 Cliffs and Excessively Steep Ground**

There already has been reference made to ground where an 'extreme hiker' wouldn't particularly care to venture into our first chapter. It has been and continues to be a



common occurrence to find the Fallers clinging to these steep slopes with their tools knocking timber down and getting injured in the process.



**No doubt about it, the ground has gotten steeper, there has to be acknowledgement as to just what we are going through while knocking Industry's timber down for them.  
No more falling by the acre, especially on this type of ground.**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FALLING ON CLIFFS**

If the Fallers have been turned loose on these extreme grounds with the expectations to work by any form of piece rate payment, this will have to stop. Human nature will cause that man to have to pick up the pace, weighted down with his tools, and already on cliffs which are openly inviting a disaster, especially if the form of payment is 'by the acre'. The current method of tallying up the ground coverage is inaccurate. The dot grids which are used with a setting map are inaccurate when measuring ground which is sloped. They are meant to be used on the flats, where they will in fact give an accurate tally of the ground to be covered. Everyone knows this. Make sure ropes, crampons (where applicable) and a helper as a tie-off man are made available for Fallers doing cliffs and excessively steep ground.

### **7.7 Excessive Snowfalls**

Have you ever taken a trip through the higher country shortly after a good dump of snow and witnessed huge mounds clinging to trees. Some of those pristine lumps of snow may have been rained on, then frozen and man, can they do some damage to a Faller when they let go on top of him. These blocks of semi-ice can weigh in the upwards of 100

pounds. Compound that weight dropping 40 feet out of the sky onto a torso and you have definite soft tissue damage and broken bones.



**If you've experienced a huge dump of snow overnight as in this photo and things have warmed up to the point it's already 'slipping' from the trees when you go to work, go home, let the dictating weather do its thing. The Faller environment will be a lot safer the next day.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXCESSIVE SNOWFALLS**

When dealing with snow-loaded trees there are a few routes we can take that will make tackling this hazard a little safer. Things will be site specific. The fact of the matter is, when the snow blocks are in the trees, the Fallers shouldn't be. It must be recognized by all that these are indeed a hazard and they can injure the Faller if he is hit by one. If the Fallers report to work and current weather conditions have warmed up causing the snow to slip on its own, great, turn the crummy around and go home for the day. Mother Nature will have things fixed up for you tomorrow when you return to the jobsite.

**Bad planning, obstinate management or 'the push' being applied to the Fallers may dictate that safe, common sense will not be an option.** In order to keep the boss happy there is one thing that works that bucks WCB's recommendations (no excessive brushing) and brush the snow out of the trees with the timber you are falling, this may help. We won't recommend this but if it's the difference between keeping your job and getting hit by an ice clump you may want to try this.

## **7.8 Heavy Rainfalls**

Fallers have been going down with ground 'sluffs' caused by torrential rains for some time now. Because logging operations continue to venture into and are taking place on

steeper, more broken-up ground, the risk of mud and rock slides causing site degradation is greater than it used to be. Environmental concerns have brought site-stability studies on nearly every block being logged today where risk of slides are a concern. We finally have a page that both the Fallers and the environmentalist can read off of in a friendly manner. What has come into play in the last few years are rainfall shut-down periods. When X amount of rain has fallen over a 24 hour period, logging operations are supposed to cease for a specified time period, allowing the water to drain into the river systems without parts of the mountainside being mixed in with it. Though we are quite certain there was no real concern for worker safety when the rainfall shutdown procedures were drafted up, this is indeed a tool which can be used to help keep the Fallers from being caught in a mudslide. As usual, we have the good operators following proper procedure and bad ones which do not, of which many of us have been part of, and which the next recommendations are directly aimed at.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEAVY RAINS**

**Licence Holders, Woods Foremen, Bull Buckers and Fallers all must adhere to the Rainfall Shutdown Procedures that have been laid out in the Logging Prescription.**

Any ground based units such as a Faller could be caught up in a slide. As timber hits the ground, especially in the cases of larger trees, the ground will shudder. When super saturation is occurring, this could be all it takes to start a slide. This situation is very real, it has happened before and it no longer needs to, thanks to environmental concerns. Don't go out and dump the rain gauge in the morning and tell your Fallers to get out there and go to work knowing that they shouldn't. To do anything like this is utterly ludicrous, uncalled for and the Fallers' lives will have just been put on the line once again unnecessarily!

## **7.9 Snags**

BC Faller Training Standard identified and covered this topic well enough already. The Fallers have been cutting these down for years and will continue to do so.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SNAGS**

Bear in mind that every snag will be a little different. The more seasoned the Faller the more of these he will have dealt with over the years, compiling all that wholesome information away for later safe usage and to be shared. Having said that, safe snag falling will be site specific depending on what you as a Faller have just encountered in your quarter. Are you confident in tackling it and going home to your family afterwards? If not, go get another set of eyes to look at it, try and be sure these eyes are as or more experienced than yours.

If both of you don't like it, leave it. If two of you feel you may be injured in the process of getting the snag in question felled, you are more than likely right. Seek an alternate method. Use dynamite, machinery or scratch it up and nail it with something from a safe distance that you know will definitely finish the job. Snagging out must take place in a safe, orderly fashion with everyone's well-being in mind. Don't have the setting or roadway being snagged out after harvesting operations begin, where a snag being felled could hit another person or vehicle.

On those big, slabbed up snags we encounter we will recommend using the conventional undercut because these types of snags will be taken down one piece at a time. Lots of times a slab will want to drop straight down instead of falling outwards and away like a tree. With a humbolt undercut this could cause the slab to kick out and end up anywhere, possibly on top of the Faller. With the flat top of a conventional, it will come to rest still perpendicular, then have a far better chance of falling away from the remaining snag and Faller.

**When the Woods Foreman or Bullbucker comes along and tries to humiliate you into taking a chance that you are not comfortable with, offer him your saw and tell him to go cut it down.** If he chooses to actually take you up on the offer (which they usually won't), more power to him, say thanks!

With regards to large coastal snags and alternate methods for dealing with these, we have a question. It was public knowledge that WCB had developed and piloted a Fallers Blasting Course to help with bringing down those real terrifying snags that as a Faller we are all aware exist. What happened? We followed things to the piloting stage and never heard another thing about it. If it has been shelved for one reason or another, we'd like to recommend that it becomes unshelved, fixed if need be and made available to the falling community.

## **7.10 Excessive Heat**

Here is one topic that the medical profession has covered in depth on countless occasions. There is more information readily available on heat stroke and dehydration along with the debilitating affects it can have on a human being than we could ever hope to cover in this document. Under normal circumstances the Fallers will find themselves shut down during excessive heat to stay within forest fire protocol. Leading up to a shutdown period due to heat, the Fallers should find themselves on early shift, avoiding the afternoon heat. There have been some inconsiderate things done with Fallers with regards to heat which we'll identify with hopes that they will cease. One of these stunts we find ourselves in is this. Along with the hot season comes extended periods of daylight. Due to one reason or another all of which are out of the Fallers hands, an outfit will double shift their Fallers. This means there will be an early shift, which is fine, and an afternoon shift, which is just inviting a Faller to come down with a heat-related sickness. Management's recommendation for working in the heat is just drink lots of water; this is probably what their moms told them when they were toddlers playing at the beach many years ago. Too much water will have an adverse affect on a human; you start too literally flush the minerals necessary to function out of your system which will inevitably cause problems. The fact that the saws we operate are air cooled has to be considered also. As the saw cools itself through the flywheel removing hot air from the system, the immediate surrounding atmosphere is warmed up by this process, which includes the area the Faller spends his day working in.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXCESSIVE HEAT**

- When the hot season comes, get on early shift. The sooner you start work in the morning, the sooner you are out of the bush in the afternoon. Keep water consumption down to a couple of litres a shift, supplement with sports beverages,

these have necessary minerals in them. If the Faller is susceptible to leg cramps in the heat, these will also give immediate relief to those, keep that one in mind. **Abolish afternoon falling shift during the heat waves.** You will find that you aren't getting any production out of your Fallers by doing this as they are spending most of the time suffering from being hot. **Management, go take a first aid course to get familiar with heat-related sicknesses and how to avoid them.** Either this or when you notice the radiators on your equipment are boiling over due to heat, your Fallers are in the same situation up on that side hill. Acknowledge this, shut them down, it's too hot to be falling.

## 8 Mandatory Radios

This chapter is going to be for the most part one big recommendation for the rule makers to take into very serious consideration. Most Fallers in this day and age own a hand held radio which they wear in a chest pack, on their belt or just carry in their pocket. We still come across the odd area where personal radios aren't being used to their fullest potential or by all the men on a Falling crew. We can look back over the years and attribute many accidents that could have been prevented if a Faller had have been in better touch with his surroundings. This proves pertinent to vehicles passing through our barricades, bad stacking practices or site congestion, where the last line of defence for another workers safety may be a Faller letting him know that there is a runaway heading at him, grab some cover and grab it quick! This we will identify as an extremely lame excuse but, it is the truth.

Most of us that are equipped with radios do have microphones to go with them. We must also stress that having the radio plumbed into speakers or an ear jack in our earmuffs is an essential part of these systems working to their fullest potential. The audio part of radio communications can be achieved in a few separate ways. Factory built earmuffs with speakers can be bought at any communications supplier for a couple of hundred dollars or less.

If this proves to be more money than what you'd like to shell out, many of the innovative guys around us have taken an old set of 'walkman' headphones and wired them into their earmuffs. This was how we were doing things before the factory models appeared, it works just great! If you want to go the third route which works just fine, buy an ear jack and throw it up in the earmuff. This method costs a couple or three bucks and will also ensure that the wearer does not miss any transmissions that are being broadcasted.

The old standby method of listening for your partners saw does work; radio communication takes the guess work out of things. A quick call when you don't hear your neighbours saw running will be the difference of having to make visual contact which could entail a walk over some fairly rugged ground or just knowing he's alright and getting back to work. In the event of an emergency, having the crew on the same wave length will only help to expedite emergency evacuation procedures, adding precious moments to the 'golden hour'.

Some of our employers have realized the importance of radio communications amongst their Fallers and promote this by adding an extra five dollars per day to our rates. Over a twenty-day month a Faller could rent a radio from a shop and still put some left over money in his own pocket. In the event the job is going to run for four or five months, that five dollars a day bought the Faller a new radio.

Radios with headsets should be an integral part of a Fallers gear, just like a saw or safety pants, we recommend they become mandatory.

## 9 Distractions and Added Stress

### 9.1 Overview

Remember the good old days when all a Faller had on his mind was keeping himself alive while performing his job and maybe the missus and him were going through a nasty divorce or possibly some other family crisis. The excess ‘baggage’ that the individual independent Faller packs around with him nowadays brought on by this job would send most normal folk ‘right off the deep end’.

Falling, even under the grandest of circumstances, has been openly identified as one of the most hazardous occupations on the globe. Having read this report so far, we like to think you have been made aware that the job of Falling truly has some negative factors surrounding its workforce already which is causing them to get hurt and be killed. Let’s compound things up a little further by the fact that most of the Fallers to date are packing issues on their minds making it virtually impossible to stay focussed on the job. Many of us are in such a rut with our lives; the last thing we are thinking of is falling the next tree safely.

Several years ago a Vancouver Sun article appeared with regards to Fallers and their accidents. There was a quote in this article from a gentleman who was a WCB officer at the time which went along the lines of, “We feel that a lot of the accidents that the Fallers are involved in are because their minds just aren’t on the job.” Talk about the understatement of the century! I could be found a few lines further on in the same article stating how I had been blown off some timber I was trying to buck by rotor wash caused by a helicopter working too close. This is worksite congestion at its finest.

I often wondered how many people made a connection between the two paragraphs there. While the research work was deeply underway on this project, I consulted with a well known and respected (with some) colleague over this very chapter you are about to read. He may have given the only logical recommendation that will come out of this chapter; in his course way of getting a message through, it went pretty close as follows;

“Mike, if a guy can’t pack the miseries of being a Faller these days on his shoulders, he’s in the wrong business, get out of it and go do something else.” Bit of job security there I guess for the rest of us who have learned to live with things.

In this section we consider the following:

- Independent Faller – The One Man Company
- Faller vs. Faller
- Fallers and Certification
- Length of Contracts
- The Walking Wounded
- Non-compliance of those around us.

- Delinquent Pay Periods
- Fatigue

## 9.2 Independent Faller, the One Man Company

Giving representation to the Independent Falling community of British Columbia is what our organization, the Western Fallers Association is structured around. The Forest Industry over the time span of about 15 years created a completely separate entity with the spawning of us. During the mid '80's it became virtually impossible to get a job as a Faller unless you were willing to set up your own one man company.

Why were we created? I think the best explanation of that is what was said to me personally some years back by a payroll secretary for a larger integrated logging company who openly announced one spring at start up time, "There will be no more Fallers on our payroll this year, we can't afford them because of the WCB costs." Well imagine that, she just referred to her Fallers as being a liability to the company she is employed by. Yes, in more ways than one we are one huge economic savings to the Forest Industry compared to our brothers on the payroll. One of the main reasons for Industry creating us was to save money on WCB costs incurred through the loss of experience ratings; each time a company has a lost time accident on its WCB account, the assessment rate goes up.

And if the company's rate is not going to go up if a Faller has an accident on their job, are they going to be as inclined to look after that man as well? Of course not!

Here is the plain truth of the matter.

**The Independents as we know them today are really nothing more than an employee, supplying his own tools and WCB coverage.**

Everything else about us is quite comparable to a company, payroll Faller. Fuels, rides and camp costs where applicable are all supplied for us. We are told when to start and stop work and our wages are paid by the day. Near as we could trace back, the first independent popped up in Terrace, BC about 32 years ago.

We've since been referred to by some of our colleagues at the IWA as 'a virus'. No doubt about it, the concept of having us as one man companies became so popular, there are but a hand full of payroll company Fallers left operating in British Columbia, and their union, the Steelworkers-IWA Council repeatedly has to fight with the companies to retain the status of those remaining Fallers.

Many of us did not want to go this route with forming our own companies; we were forced into it to keep a job at the occupation we had chosen for our careers. Until legislation was passed in 1992, WCB did not like us running these little one man operations; I sometimes believe they were aware then of the complexities that were about to arise from us doing this.

Never mind just going out day after day and working at your job, now you have the added responsibility of running and maintaining a small company. You now have to keep it as well as yourself alive. There are accountants that must be paid, CRA and GST payment to keep on top of, tools to buy and upkeep on those. And when you are not



working, there is no income; you now have to become your own EI until another job pops up.

When these companies were first being forced upon us, some outfits would try and justify things by saying it will be six of one, half a dozen of the other for our pay, in other words the pay increase we will give you will compensate for all the added responsibilities. Very few Primes are still making an effort to keep that commitment up, most are not. They have adopted the fallacy that the pay cheque that is issued to our company name is the individual mans to spend as he so wishes. That is not how it works. By the time we look after our operating costs as mentioned, whatever is left over has to cover groceries, some clothes for the kids and a mortgage or rent has many of the Independent Fallers living below the poverty line. Is this any way to treat a person that works hard in this day and age?

Somewhere a few chapters back we brought the length of our seasons into the picture, in short every fourth or fifth season we all work, full time. Due to an Industry that is riddled with uncertainties, we have become part time workers, with nothing to fill the gaps. You will have one good season where the bills are paid then many where we will be juggling what little money we have and coming up continually short on payments.

Here's where the problems begin. If you are down to your last few dollars due to extended shutdown periods, what are you going to do, buy a bag of groceries or make an income tax payment? We're Fallers; we are not money managers, especially during uncertain times.

Many of us are out there on the stump wondering if the family is still in the house they left them in a week ago when they returned to work after a six-month shutdown. We headed off to work with the bank threatening to foreclose our mortgage because Revenue Canada had seized the account which had the house payments in it to recover some of the thousands we owe them for unpaid taxes. It's going to be very easy for many to say, "That's not our problem, it's yours." Take that thought one small step backwards, while it may be the individual's problem at present, the root source will be traced right back to a situation that was forced upon us by the very industry we wanted to work for!

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDEPENDENT FALLERS**

- **Face it, these are virtual employees!:** One man companies never should have been forced upon the Falling community to start with; they were a quick fix solution for greedy contractors to increase their profit margins and shed responsibility to the Faller. The Forest Industry knows this. Current industry structure along with the many uncertainties that we all are aware of being part of the same sector, no longer justifies many of us being made to operate as independent Fallers. Those that so wish to, and there are many, should be welcomed back as payroll employees. One Faller operating as a company also creates other notable complications which we brought to light.

### **9.3 Faller vs. Faller**

Though somewhat isolated, the worry for some of the remaining few company Fallers losing their current status and being forced to convert to being an Independent is a daily

concern, gnawing away at those guys. Take a Faller that's been working at the same job for the last 18 years under the umbrella of a contained, unionized situation. Do you think for one minute that man wants to give up his status and have to go out and start one of these small companies, with all the hassles that go along with it that we just talked about?

I'm afraid not! Many of the independents, without a doubt, are envious of the conditions the company Fallers work under as opposed to what many of them find themselves working under.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMPANY FALLERS**

- **Leave these guys alone!** Independent falling companies no longer work well due to standards and instability created by the Forest Industry. Why ruin some more lives by forcing Independent status on these remaining few company Fallers?

## **9.4 Fallers and Certification**

Mandatory Faller Certification will be classified as something that is riding on every Faller's conscience these days. For many years, there has been a clash between how WCB dictates things should be done and how the industry dictates things to be done with, the Fallers caught right smack in the middle. With all our 'new age' falling methods, things have truly gotten worse in this aspect.

Faller Certification has now amplified the gap between what the WCB wants to see and what a Faller truly has to do to keep everyone else in the Forest Sector happy. In order to appreciate this problem to its fullest you would have to:

- Be a Faller, knowing what industry expects of him.
- Know and understand the rules laid out in the 'Faller's Standard'.
- Know and understand WCB's other Regulations.

**The Fallers are all aware that there is indeed a huge grey area blanketing these three points collectively that no one other than the Fallers are willing to acknowledge.** There is the concern by the Fallers also that the people we work for may be able to use the certification to have them fired, as well as someone else coming along (Board Officer) who will want to pull their certificate, when all that man was doing was trying to stay within the boundaries laid out by a harvesting prescription or Woods Foreman.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CERTIFICATION**

- Education and awareness for all entities involved in the BC Forest Industry to bring them up to speed with the falling community. Read this report cover to cover paying extra close attention to the Chapter on Faller Certification and Appendix 'A', where you will find a few of WCB's rules and guidelines we have highlighted for your reading pleasure. Cross reference between the 'New Age' harvesting methods and Appendix 'A', you may be in for a surprise.

## 9.5 Length of Contracts

Just when you think there could be no more uncertainties to possibly draft into an occupation littered with problems already, we have some Licensees awarding what could be longer term (five years) contracts on an annual or less basis to Falling Contractors. Is this really necessary? The Fallers identify this action as merely another way to keep the wages suppressed, adding more economic instability to their lives and keep them cutting each others throats.

Some of these 'Company Bean Counters', which is where many of these decisions come from, might want to start factoring human nature into their equations. It gets to the point that there is no incentive left to do a safe, productive job. The attitude of "Who cares, we're not going to be here next year anyway," takes over the whole falling crew, creating both transparent and opaque problems.

### RECOMMENDATIONS ON UNNECESSARILY SHORT CONTRACT LENGTHS

- **Keep contracts stable and predictable:** Where you as an owner or licensee have the opportunity to award a stable contract, do so, even if the best you can offer is two years back to back. Create some economic stability for a few Fallers with your actions. Show some real considerate thought and go for five years. In the long run you will be doing the right thing for your company.

## 9.6 The Walking Wounded

There is a classification of Faller that due to one circumstance or another is working with a minor injury when he shouldn't be. We've come to term this group the 'walking wounded'.

Many of our injuries go undocumented and unrecognized until the aggravation of a sprain or strain causes us to be involved in a more serious accident because our concentration was blurred due to already present aches and pain. In the cases of a sore ankle or knee the Faller couldn't move fast enough to get out of the way of something and bang, now you have some broken bones.

WCB records have indicated that Fallers minor injuries have actually dropped. There is an unnoticed relationship with the fact that as the minor injury number was coming down; the number of Fallers operating as independents was going up. The reality is our minor wounds haven't slowed down; in many cases they are not being recorded.

The structure of the current system as a whole with regards to minor injuries is not favourable for the independent Faller. It is geared for employees that report to a stable job, 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, 47 weeks a year.

Under these circumstances when an employee sprains a knee or whatever, he'll be instructed to go home, rest the sore part and take a few weeks to heal up. He finishes healing up and reports back to his duties at the plant. The offer of some form of 'light duty' work will also be made available if needed. Let's run through much the same scenario involving an independent Faller.

This is another reason why these one man companies just aren't working. A Faller reports to a job after a lengthy shutdown, happy to be back to work because he's been in

financial peril for the last month. He's out of shape and put in some fairly rough going where he twists an ankle the first day back.

Now in the real world, the guy should take the weight of the sore part and rest it for a week or so. By this man taking another couple of weeks off, he might lose his home, he needed this job! Because the 'Push' is probably on and soon as he leaves his position on the crew it will be filled with another Faller, leaving nothing for him to come back to in a couple of weeks. Given this set of circumstances, that man is going to grit his teeth and bear the pain, possibly causing more damage to himself.

For one of the same reasons we were created, that being the cost savings on WCB experience rating system to our employers, the Faller may not want this accident on his records, causing his assessment rates to go up. We will acknowledge this is a poor way of thinking, but it's the truth.

A lot of times economics will be dictating how we are treated. It's going to cost to get the man out of camp and back in, so we're told to take a day off, rest the swollen part, and then get back at 'er. Nothing had time to heal properly and along with that the man is treated like an expendable unit by having to keep going until he can't. Understaffing will cause this situation and also the attitude of "Well he may be not getting around so good, but half a Faller is better than no Faller when we're short of men to get the job done."

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 'WALKING WOUNDED'**

- **Right not to work injured is a sham and needs to be fixed:** The men involved in this problem are a prime example of workers caught up in an **absolute system failure**. To effectively address this matter would entail another document by us, leading to an overhaul of the Forest Industry with regards to the independent Fallers involved in small injuries. After this, there would have to be a major Policy review and restructuring on WCB's part. Is this ever going to happen? Right now the onus is on the individual's shoulders with everyone else merrily going on about their business.
- By these minor injuries not being documented and attended too, the Board thinks the small accidents have dropped. This is a fallacy!

### **9.7 Non-Compliance from Those around Us**

Lack of compliancy and respect for a Faller's job from management and other workers on a logging site without a doubt adds to unnecessary stress levels being shared by the Fallers on a daily basis. The Fallers know their duties and responsibilities when it comes to safe working distances and not injuring a colleague with a falling tree or runaway.



**The Fallers know their responsibilities to keeping the rest of the workforce safe around us.  
All too often our good gestures are ignored by many who just don't give a damn!**

Management along with many of the other workers around us seem to be oblivious to the fact they could be killed by one of our falling trees. The Fallers go to great lengths to put signs up and cordon off roads in an effort to avoid hitting a 'tourist' with a falling tree or runaway. Our barricades and good gestures are ignored by people driving right through them and showing up in the middle of an active falling area, many times when a Faller has a real questionable situation going on as it is. Now he's got the ol' bastard Wood Foreman just pulled in right below him for a look.

Many times quality control personnel will be spotted out in our brush, right where the next tree is cut up to fall, coming for a visit. We talked about worksite congestion, both due to poor planning and deliberate. We end up with a whole crews working below us with every tree we let go becoming a stressful situation for us wondering if this will be the one that turns, heads down the hill and kills the buckler man working below him.

Whenever we hear of a Foreman's truck or piece of equipment getting hit by a falling tree, right away it was the Faller's fault. Very few, other than the Fallers themselves seem to acknowledge the fact that an active falling area is a danger zone.

While this is truly annoying and adding to our stress levels, it will inevitably be the other worker that gets injured in these situations unnecessarily!

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NON-COMPLIANCE AROUND FALLERS

- First off, **start thinking**, when you come to a sign or cordoned off road indicating you are entering an active falling area, obey the sign's request and don't just drive around it. It has been put there for your safety, now comply with the Faller's wishes that you make contact before proceeding any further. Worksite congestion must be avoided or remedied through proper planning. Don't put workers below Fallers, everybody loses by this action. The way the things are structured is the Faller will be identified as being liable if he hits another worker or piece of equipment with a falling tree, **liability must go back to the person that caused the other worker or machine to be within striking distance of the Faller**. We know having people below us is wrong and we don't like it.

### 9.8 Delinquent Pay Periods

The whole reason a person goes to work is to receive a pay cheque to reinvest into his and his dependents' lives on this planet. You don't go to work to stay fit, you go to the gym. You don't go to work for entertainment, you go to the pub or a movie. The whole world runs on bills and receivables rolling over once a month. We have some outfits operating with the attitude that their Fallers should be carrying their part of the company payroll, which translates into some of us not seeing a full pay cheque for up to 5 months (or not at all in the event you couldn't hang on and went and got a real job) from the day you go to work for one of these guys. Employment Standards recognizes this as a crime, in their eyes an independent has the right to be paid every 16 days maximum. Why should a guy already burdened with the many concerns that go with being an independent Faller now have to worry about his pay showing up on time?

This problem we have identified could blossom into a real plague with the full implementation of BC Timber Sales and the program they promote. They are creating more competition in an already over-competitive market. This problem of delinquent pay periods is isolated to the independent falling community. If you ask any of the other workers on a logging crew if they are being paid on time, you'll find that they are.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAY PROBLEMS

- **The Faller shouldn't have to chase his pay:** There must be a screening process developed and adhered to that both the Licensees and BC Timber Sales can adopt to check out a Prime Contractor to see if they indeed have the infrastructure to meet a regular payroll for all employees including Independents.

This is where the problem could be addressed before it becomes an item chewing away on a Faller. What we see right now is a bad actor will knock out a good actor's bid, based on the bad guy not having to meet pay expectations for a falling crew.

Other options will be the log brokerage, that the prime is selling the wood to, be made to come up with wages to carry the job before the final scale is tallied up. These log brokerages make an awful lot of money for virtually no layout on their returns.

Primes, if you plan to make the falling contractor carry the payroll, do the infrastructure check on the falling company, show some responsibilities. Make sure that falling contractor can meet a regular payroll, even if he has to go to the bank and apply for a loan, anything to ensure the independent Fallers on your crew are not carrying the payroll themselves. It will be one less thing for the Fallers to have to worry about. The Industry is going to find also that these unsavoury characters we have just mentioned will have no emergency first aid procedures at hand either, in many cases there won't even be a band-aid on the claim!

## **9.9 Fatigue**

There could be many reasons a Faller is run down so far he can't think clearly enough to perform his job safely. Fatigue has been identified many times by some of the 'brainstormers' through out the Industry as a contributing factor to Faller accidents. Very good, could this be caused by one or several reasons in conjunction of the numerous things we have mentioned so far? If not, here are a few more items for consideration. As a general point of interest, if you are fatigued to the point of unclear thinking, you are physically and emotionally overdoing it!

### ***9.9.1 Fatigued (Length of Day)***

It was recognized many years ago that the job of a Faller was labour intensive and that we do indeed get tuckered out as the day progresses. Common sense prevailed regarding this fact and the length of a Faller's working day became 7 hours from the time he left the crummy until the time he was back on the road in the afternoon for pickup. This worked to help keep a guy from getting so worn down that he dropped a tree on himself or someone around him. It has been like this for many years. Now what we have going on is some outfits feel their Fallers should be walking in and out of the bush on their own time. This situation will be directly linked back to economics. The contractors that ask this of their Fallers are not the ones running a normal operation.

These are the guys that have taken on a job that might need a section of road redone or built and they are too cheap or too disorganized to do the work before the falling commences. The Fallers will end up walking for miles over unfinished grade. Another favourite stunt, particularly through the Interior is having the Fallers walk in to helicopter jobs instead of flying them in a support 'chopper'. There are helicopter regulations in place clearly stating that no Faller shall be walking distances greater than 20 minutes.

Our walks are not a leisurely stroll in the park. We have the weight of our fuels and packs on our backs, and a guy may have snowshoes strapped to his feet as well. The last thing a Faller feels like doing after an hour and a half walk to get to his tools in the morning is producing, think about that. These very same jobs also will have no medi-vac procedures in place. If there is a crippling accident involving a Faller that far off a beaten trail, there will be no way of getting to medical help using the 'golden hour' they preach in first aid training courses. The reason this is taking place is all the bids that took into account the Fallers not having to walk great distances got knocked out by the bad actor's bid.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LENGTH OF A FALLER'S DAY

- **Limit Shift Time:** Any and all Fallers in BC shall not work in excess of 7 hours from the time they leave the road to the time they return, this includes helicopter jobs also. Drop off and pick up will have a time span of 7 hours between the 2 points. The business of making Fallers walk all over the province on their time must cease. They are worn down before they even get to their tools and start falling. It is counter productive.

### ***9.9.2 Fatigued (Length of Shift)***

Here is another contributing factor to Faller accidents that must be addressed. The number of weeks in row that we as Fallers are asked to put in before any time off is granted. We've identified the job itself as being physically demanding and there are many other (unusual) circumstances a man can find himself in with the job of falling. Compound all of that with having to go out far too many weeks in a row with no breaks and you are asking for trouble. It's always seems to be a combination of negative events (permit troubles, understaffing, run of bad weather, poor planning) for our employers that can lead up to the Fallers having to work these extended shifts. There are the economic excuses we are told also for this, such as "It costs money to fly guys back and forth, therefore you have to stay in camp for at least 30 days." Whatever the reasons may be, we will say they are uncalled for. We will acknowledge that at start up time for the beginning of the season it will be to everyone's advantage to put a lengthy shift in and get some wood on the ground.

The Fallers are generally rested up; flat broke and quite willing to give 'er. After this one shot blitz to get some wood ahead, things should taper back to a reasonable time on/ time off situation for the Fallers, never mind this attitude of just keep working until you are no longer thinking clearly and hurt yourself. There are some men in our occupation that seem to thrive off these extended shifts.

In a lot of cases it will be a younger fellow, no home life so to speak of, who spends his camp life in his room reading, sleeping and eating vitamins and supplements. Even if these guys are willing to stay in camp for 45 days straight falling timber, management should still keep a close eye on these men after a few weeks. Everything may appear rosy in the cook shack with this man but workmanship could be deteriorating on a daily basis in their quarters where alertness counts the most.

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON EXTENDED SHIFTS

- **Fallers need to be rested:** Whether the shift is in camp or the Fallers are working out of home, no man should be expected to report more than 14 days in a row to fall timber without being given 4-5 days off to rest up. Blow out days will not count as a day off, the Faller still went through the motions of getting up at 4:00 am, donning his work clothes and driving out to the bush before being turned around due to windy conditions. This was not a day off.

We've consulted with many employers over the length of shift issue who have announced they believe the 5 on, 2 off is the only way to go because in the long run they are getting more work out of us. Trust them to see things that way. Do



not force extended shifts on anyone. As mentioned, you may very well have a select few that are up to it, fine. Keep an eye on these guys and bear in mind they will end up just as worn out and used up at an early age as many of us are already.

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This concludes our entry on some of the distractions a Faller will be going through on a very frequent basis which could indeed be causing him to not be focussed on his work. These items we have chosen to list are specific to our occupation. Never forget the host of other things that the general working public is forever identifying as adding to their unnecessary stress levels. Fallers are susceptible to all those as well but unlike other occupations where there is counselling available and time off with pay to contend with these issues, the Independents are expected to either shoulder the burden and get on with it or pack their gear up and go home.

## 10 Faller Certification (The Fallers Take on the Concept)

Many of you that will read this document are aware of WCB's newly developed 'Faller Training Standard' and the "Mandatory Certification" process which came out of that and is going on right now in BC. The 'Grandfathering' process has been implemented to ensure that all current Fallers operating in the province are up to speed with the knowledge a new trainee will be receiving if he so chooses falling as a career.



**Faller Certification has many good things to offer the workers involved in such a deadly profession.**

Our organization, for obvious reasons, has been involved with WCB all along the way with this project. We supplied input and feedback, both derogatory and positive as the program was developing, along with becoming involved in several piloting sessions over the years with regards to the project.

After many consultation sessions with Fallers and a lot of deliberation amongst our own Board, we chose to support and promote 'Faller Certification' in the province of British Columbia. Through the early consultation process with many of our own people, we received mixed reviews from the people who this was about to affect the most, the Fallers. There was one thing in common with everyone we talked to along the way, the concept of Faller Certification is a good idea and it should have been developed and implemented many years ago.

Of all the occupations on the globe, the job of falling should not have been left to run itself to the point of being unmonitored, unregulated and unrecognized; for what the job entailed, it wasn't working and we recognized this. There have been countless studies done on a certified workforce. Though they will be looking at different occupations and different scenarios in most cases, each report will draw to the same conclusion; a certified workforce gets hurt and killed less. This has been proven!

There were several very negative factors which the falling community had every right to be concerned about. The first of these was whether this was going to be a repeat of the early 1990's when Faller Certification was first attempted. That turned out to be a ticket you paid 200.00 + dollars for, and then ended up meaning 'nothing'. In short we identified it as just another money grab.

There wasn't much content to the first course along with the fact that many of the people presenting the thing to the Fallers had no business in doing so. They knew somewhere in the range of very little to nothing of what the actual job was all about. There was no Industry recognition as to whether or not you had been certified, which meant the half those who didn't bother paying the money and going through the process were laughing at the ones that did. This went on for approximately 2 years before fizzling out and dying. Most of the problems we just identified with round one have been sufficiently addressed with the current Fallers Grandfathering process. The course was developed by men with sound falling backgrounds along with being piloted by active Fallers who gave it the seal of approval. The Qualified Supervisor/ Trainers (QST's) who were enlisted to get the program out to the falling community were all made to go through the process themselves and had to score high.



**Even with having some truly outstanding men drawn right out of the falling community as our QST's, the Fallers are finding the concept questionable.**

After that they went to a couple of weeks of schooling to be able to properly assess the rest of the Fallers. We now had the right people in place to deliver a substantial program to the active Fallers. We have WCB regulations in place backing everything where there was none the first time and Industry, through representation of the BC Forest Safety Council, appears to be in support of everything. Superficially things seemed pretty tight.

As with anything new there will be scepticism and criticism as it is rolled out and implemented, that's human nature. Nobody particularly felt like shelling money out of their own pocket to go through this thing and the WFA felt they shouldn't really have to, but reluctantly one by one we did. Industry did subsidize part of the individual's fee through money made available from WCB and that did help diffuse this issue to some degree. Faller Certification has made it over several hurdles. Let's take a closer look at the big picture, which is the one the Fallers are viewing on a daily basis. These are the prime contributors to our reluctance and concerns with the Certification Process, causing it to be questioned by the Fallers themselves. We will clarify one more time that Faller Certification is good, but many of the situations that we find ourselves in as Fallers working for the Forest Industry of BC are not.

Quite frankly we are about to bring some things to light that we don't have the answers to. A collection of other entities which are indirectly linked to the Fallers that will read this are going to have to get back to us on just what the plan is going to be, because we definitely have another one of these systems failures happening with the Fallers caught right smack in the middle once again. In short, the Fallers would like very much to operate within the boundaries of the new 'BC Training Standard' but due to many current Industry standards and practices outlined in this report already, the Fallers find themselves not being able to; it's an impossibility. We know this, now we've just shared that little detail with everybody else.

There was a huge following of Fallers that had no problems when it came to passing both the written and practical exams attached to the 'Grandfathering' process. These guys already had been going about their business of being a Faller as safely as things would permit in this day and age. They demonstrated that to their QST, passed everything and went back to work, many without reading any of the information contained in the info flips they received prior to doing the exams.

This was confirmation that anything contained in Faller Certification wasn't really new or comparable to having to be a rocket scientist to figure out. It was simple safe falling practices that should be used by the individual Faller on a daily basis to aid him in getting home each day after work. Our Certification people have identified that there are 25% of the Fallers operating in BC right now that are having problems with the exam causing some to fail. Are these necessarily bad Fallers?

No, they are what we have come to call 'products of industry'. Many didn't receive any real training, particularly through our Interior regions, but this is by no means isolated there. There are remedial programs being developed right now to help this group. Great!

We identified in the last chapter that Faller Certification is on the minds of many as a distraction. Many items in this document have brought forward issues created by the Forest Sector that are in direct conflict with Faller Certification. It can't be helped to operate outside the guidelines set out in the BC Faller Training Standard. Here is a prime

example. A QST will contact a Faller to go through the process of being 'Grandfathered'. The Faller will say "Great, let's do it. I'm currently working up so and so road on a retention job." The Faller will then be advised by his QST that taking his test in a retention situation is not advised as he may fail his test due to some of the unavoidable things he will have going on as a retention Faller. OK, we just got informed that we couldn't pass our test under these situations and yet many of us are going to work on a daily basis as Fallers on retention settings.

Another 'product of industry' situation which 'bucks' many of the good things in the new Training Standard is the cutting of corners to get the job done. Obviously the chapter on production pressures brought many of these reasons to light why a Faller may be out there cutting corners. The main reason for corner cutting can be linked directly back to economics.

A Faller is working at a job on piece rate that will not permit him to work in a safe, civil manner. Every corner imaginable must be cut (of which most of us are masters at) in order to make a wage. There is no time to brush escape routes out or assess situations. How we've put it once already, "head down and running". It appears to the falling community that no one was acknowledging this little item either. One very good example of this is the conflicting issue of back barring. The 'Standard' condemns this action used by all of us, and for fair enough reasons we won't get into. If you back bar during an exam, you fail. When a Faller is working at a tree length situation in smaller timber where he is expected to fall 300+ trees a day, just the difference in time to flip that saw over to do things properly will affect the Faller's production numbers.

There is another puzzling fact that has come out of our small wood colleagues with regards to back barring. Back barring cuts down on Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI) to the wrists, forearms and elbows. Some of these Fallers are mass producing small trees day in and day out. We know that and yet our health insurance company (WCB) didn't.

As RSI doesn't seem to be a recognised injury for Fallers as with cashiers or secretaries, we had to adapt to avoid coming down with the symptoms of tendonitis or such by back barring. **Many Fallers have been literally moulded to fit the environment they are working amongst. Until the barrier surrounding these guys can be broken, the Faller will not be able to change his work practices.** Can Faller Certification be fully implemented and actually become a success story?

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROPER IMPLEMENTATION OF FALLER CERTIFICATION**

- **We need to find out what a Faller can safely produce in a day:** This is what must take place in order for both the BC Training Standard and Faller Certification to live up to any of the expectations the non falling community have with it, as well as give it meritocracy with the Fallers themselves. There will have to be a team put together to actually see what a Faller can truly produce in a day within the guidelines set by the 'Standard'. This will be a project in itself, but it has to be done in order for anything attached to being a safe and productive Faller becomes a reality instead of a group of people with grand ideas just talking about it. Let's call our team the 'Fallers' Task Force'.

The Task Force shall be made up of 4 already in place QST's, a scaler or 2, a WCB person knowledgeable in falling and it probably wouldn't hurt to have someone such as a physiotherapist on board also to let them know if they are over doing anything with regards to standards set for the rest of the other occupations going on around us. Our newly formed test group will accomplish the task set out before them doing what a Faller can safely and ergonomically accomplish in a day.

We have chosen QST's to do the falling end of this experiment for the plain and simple reason there is no one else more suited for this function. These men are all active Fallers and know how to work by the Standard. Any one of them would be a credit to this project. We'll need 4. As a team, we have to turn these guys loose to fall some timber in 6-8 different areas of this Province covering all the different grounds, timber types as well as our newly developed forms of harvesting. They will put 5 days per area.

At the end of each day we turn our scalers loose to tally up what our fallers did. If this won't work, accommodate. Do whatever it's going to take to get an accurate scale tally on just what a Faller can do in a day while working within the boundaries set out in the Standard. Let's have our physiotherapist person checking backs, knees, elbows and whatever else, looking for excessive wear and tear on our Fallers. And let's have our trusted WCB guy watching and taking notes the whole time to make sure every little thing is being done properly. Process all this information and you'll have your answer to what a Faller can safely fall in a day. These numbers will have to be made available for all, depending on what areas of the Province the work is taking place. If the contract bidding system is going to remain in effect, then no bid should be allowed or accepted that falls below the figures obtained from our Fallers' Task Force. Those involved will know right away that the falling can not be done safely or correctly.

- **Certification is a Start not a Finish:** Without taking the entire contents of this report and especially this chapter very seriously, **we have nothing with Faller Certification!**

All we will have is a tool that the WCB can use to hammer on a group of guys that are already working under some very adverse circumstances created by our Forest Industry. And if that's the case, Faller Certification may as well go away; there never will be any positive returns in the form of lowering the Faller accident rates. **The success of this very justifiable and noble program is currently being held for ransom by the very Industry that is about to become its administrator, the BC Forest Sector.**

The Fallers see many good things as far as their health and well-being coming out of this program, but it will not happen without the cooperation of the entire sector. There are huge choices and commitments that must be made here and not just by the Fallers. Somebody please get back to us on this one. We're all kind of curious what the decisions going to be?

- **OK, dues, but more needs to be done:** There also is a matter of what are the annual dues that will be attached to being a Certified Faller. This fee is needed to keep a data base going, upgrade tickets and keep the project alive, so to speak. Knowing what everybody now knows about the environment that a Certified Faller is operating in, how could we ever expect (with a clear conscience) a man to have to pay money out of his pocket to be part of a program that is riddled with this many uncertainties? Just remember, it is not Faller Certification or the Training Standard where the problems exist, it's the surrounding environments where proper work ethics need to be exercised, need to be looked at and repaired.
- **Put the Standard in the Act:** Another recommendation that the WFA would like to put forward with regards to Faller Certification is the regulations (26.21 and 26.22) be legislated onto the *Workers Compensation Act*. This would give the program some added substance it truly deserves. There have already been vast amounts of time and resources put towards this program, let's go the distance!

# 11 Attitudes and Accountability

This chapter is about to cover how the safety and health issue for Fallers has managed to deteriorate to the point it is at now.

We'll have to get a little nostalgic here and go back about 30 years to the MacMillan/Bloedel days when they were the forest industry giant in BC. Back then they had company staff whose sole purpose was to promote and enforce safe work practices to the entire logging operation. These people knew and understood all the facets, from the road building through to the loading and hauling, of a logging operation and what it was going to take for everyone to operate safely with each other. These 'safety personnel' spent their time out in the field checking the workforce and the surroundings to make sure safety was indeed a priority. Accidents and mishaps still took place, but at least there was some process going on to try and make them avoidable.

There was an attitude from management in those days that 'we don't want our workers getting hurt'. When an accident did happen, it was a big deal. News rocketed through camp over a broken arm or leg or in the event of a fatality things were shut right down for a period to let the initial shock settle. People were accountable, our safety man as well as woods foremen or bullbuckers were all questioned on what may have gone wrong to cause the accident during the investigation that would follow in order to prevent the same situation from reoccurring.

In the event a worker was observed operating in an unsafe manner which could cause injury to either himself or another worker, there would be an intervention to reverse the unsafe situation that was either going on or being caused. If the Faller or road builder carried on with these unsavoury work practices after being warned to stop, penalties were imposed on that worker in the form of a suspension without pay. The length of time would depend on how severe the worker was violating safety standards laid out in the company's 'Safe Work Procedures' along with WCB's rules and regulations. There was a system in place that truly promoted safety and if anyone cared to venture off line with this program, it was deemed unacceptable. There are still outfits to this day running their logging shows in this manner, but most do not.

Because many of the harvesting operations, particularly throughout our Interior, are done on a contract basis, nobody in the upper reaches of our forest companies feel they have to enforce a safety protocol any longer. **The attitude of contracting out the responsibilities of safety is not working, there needs to be a reattachment of responsibilities towards safety between the Licensees, companies and BC Timber Sales. Contract out the work, not the accountability of making sure the jobs being done on your License are running in a safe manner.**

Over the span of 30 years we now have the attitude of 'whatever it takes to get the job done, just do it!' Safety is the last thing on management's mind. That the Fallers see this daily should now be evident with this document you just read. We are expected to work in unsafe situations created unnecessarily by the surrounding operations; it's become the norm. Whenever a Faller questions the unsafe conditions he is working in to a woods foreman or bullbucker, many times we get the reply, "If you don't want to do that, go



somewhere else, we'll just find someone who will." Many of us have left a job when given that ultimatum, and yes they always find another Faller a little more desperate and hungry for work that will dive right in and many times, becomes another statistic.

How many Fallers have had the phrase, "You Fallers are a dime a dozen." said to them? Right there this indicates that we are looked upon as expendable units by many of the people we work for. What kind of attitude is that?

Intimidation and the blackmailing of our jobs run rampant in BC to get the Fallers to do many of the things that are injuring us. We see perfectly good men fired because they brought up a safety issue. The reasons for their termination will always be obscured by another excuse, for obvious reasons, but the rest of the Fallers are well aware of what they just witnessed and will chose to stay quiet for fear of losing their jobs.

**We have taken a 180 degree turn for the worst from how things should be; the Fallers wanting to comply safely are condemned, the ones willing to throw any form of safe operating procedures to the wind are the hero's and rewarded by more work from the company they are employed by.** This is how the Fallers end up in many of the unsavoury predicaments that have been brought forward in this document. We are intimidated into doing the wrong thing by people that have a very bad attitude towards us and it works.

In a lot of cases the reason these methods will work is due to the current structure of industry as a whole as there doesn't have to be any form of accountability.

The rules and regulations laid out by WCB (see appendix) are no longer viable in the forest industry of British Columbia. Both the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Regulation were compiled on the premises that a worker was employed by a company. This form of employee/ employer relationship for the most part has become nonexistent for Fallers in BC. We've discussed the one man companies. **The independents who run these companies have fallen through the cracks when it comes to accountability from industry or WCB.**

This process of intimidation and 'job ransom' is not isolated to the falling community. We have owner/ operators of equipment that will identify a piece of ground that they are working on as too steep or rough to safely work on. Their concerns when brought forward will be replied to by the owner or woods foreman with a statement along the lines, "I've got three other skidders on a waiting list to come to work, the choice is yours if you want to work or not." That man doesn't want to become part of the next outfit's waiting list who is working up the road.

The attitude of 'unsafe or not, whatever it takes to get the job done, just do it', keeps itself flourishing in our industry. Many times it will be the Faller that has clearly indicated that he has no respect for his own life, never mind those around him, by pushing himself beyond all limits, which will be promoted to bullbucker or woods foreman by the owner of the company. This is done with idea in mind that the newly appointed supervisor will keep pushing the crew just like he pushed himself.

And around and around it goes. This is truly the wrong mindset to be in. These very same supervisors will be running through camp preaching safety and handing out pages of company Safe Work Practices (SWP), but the bottom line is that this is merely a cover

up for their own unaccountability when an accident does happen. As one member put it during the consultation process, "Management hands out SWP's like I spool off toilet paper in the latrine in the morning." Well put! And when an accident does happen causing an investigation, the first thing that supervisor will be flashing around is a set of the SWP's that has been signed of by the injured Faller so that no blame comes to rest on himself; it must be the Fallers fault.

There is one other group that has also become unaccountable, through no real fault of their own, which are the last line of defence for safety in our forests; our WCB Officers and the role they play. Due to many reasons that have been stated by many people from the WCB, and for a change I tend to believe all of them, we very rarely see these guys in the bush. It has been like this for years, which is why things are the way they are. Industry knows they can get away without exercising any true safe work ethics, so why bother.

When the site is going to be visited, there is always a day's notice given by the Board which gives the bad actors a chance to clean things up. People will be scrambling to fix up trucks and equipment. Fallers will be given the day off with pay so the outfit isn't caught with the men operating under unsafe, congested circumstances or what have you. Everything on the day of the site inspection seems fairly contained. There may be the odd minor infraction written up, but compared to what the job was being run like the day before things will look pretty ship shape. Two weeks later the Officer will be back in the same camp investigating a fatality because the job went back to being run in its usual lackadaisical manner right after the inspection was done.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ATTITUDES AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

- **Review the Act, Regulations and Guidelines:** This is big, but it will have to be implemented if we are ever going to bring the Faller accident rates down. There must be a review of WCB's rules and regulations with regards to the independent falling community. Times have changed and the rules and regulations that should be there to protect a worker haven't. **The Fallers must have the backing of the Board when addressing their own safety concerns.** The business of us having to quit or being run off our jobs in the event we are put in unsafe situations and bring this to management's attention is archaic. This adds to the contributing factors in a big way.
- **Get Safety Orientated Bullbuckers:** There must be faller supervisors (bullbuckers) that will indeed promote safety policy, not just company policy, to the Fallers. These bullbuckers must have a Falling background, have taken and passed the 'Faller Certification' process, preferably with a 90+ score and should hold some level of First Aid training. They must be out in the field on a daily basis with the crew. **These men should be the only form of management allowed to direct Fallers to their duties.** No more equipment operators, woods foremen, or quality control people (unless they are Qualified Fallers) making decisions on how a Faller is conducting himself. The bullbuckers must be ready and willing to over ride a bad call from the office in order to keep the crew safe. These judgement calls could jeopardize their own employment with many companies, but they have to be done.

- **The Big Guys must be involved:** The tools to have upper management to the level of CEO's involved with the well-being of workers appear to be in place (see the *Workers Compensation Act* appendices), both on a Provincial level and a Federal level with the advent of Bill C-45. In order to successfully implement any form of attitude change for Fallers' safety in a positive direction, we may have to exercise some of these rules.

**Fines would prove to be secondary; prison, even putting a woods foreman or owner in lockup for a week or two and having all operations cease at their jobsite while things were being reviewed would send a clear and decisive message that it is time to clean up your act when it comes to the well-being of the crews.** News like this would rocket through the Forest Sector.

- **Get the Board Officers into the Woods:** Somehow or other we have to get our Board Officers out in the forests on a regular basis with no more warning phone calls that they are coming for a visit. Giving forewarning of a safety inspection does not work, everybody knows this. Forewarnings merely translate into a waste of time for the Officer going to some job sites as things have been cleaned up and superficially look fine. Many times the Officers know something underhanded has taken place, they will acknowledge this, but there's not much they can do; if things look alright, they must document just that.

My final word on this is the following:

**Until the Fallers know that it is proper to operate safely, that they are hearing and seeing this from management at all levels, and that their livelihoods will not be held for ransom, nothing with regards to Fallers' accidents and fatalities is going to change.**

## 12 Conclusion

We have just laid out 10 Chapters with their sections on the most obvious contributing factors to Fallers' injuries. The items that we chose to list were brought up repeatedly by the Fallers themselves during the consultation process used to structure this report. There were others that could have been noted but it became necessary to cut things off at some point. If you have read this document from cover to cover you are now reading off the same page as the Fallers when it comes to answering the question of why we get injured at such an alarming rate.

Now comes the question of can anything actually be done to bring the Faller accidents rates down.

We feel the answer to this is 'yes'.

While the problems were indeed identified by the Fallers themselves, all the recommendation and best practices that were documented have been drawn right back out of the forest harvesting sector. Somewhere right now an owner, foreman, or bullbucker is making safe judgement calls for their Fallers and it is working. How do we get everyone reading off the good operators' page?

Economics was repeatedly drafted into the equation by us and for a very valid reason. We've witnessed the best and the worst literally operating a mile apart in the same valley. We will acknowledge the industry remains to operate under negative economic impacts brought on by a few people south of our border who are holding the efficiency of our sawmills for ransom through the implementation of tariffs and surcharges on their products.

Many of the new harvesting techniques that cause injuries to our Fallers we understand have been implemented at the request of environmental groups. Global marketing in general will be considered but none of the aforementioned should be an excuse for injuring Fallers or any forest worker for that matter. Our Licensees continue to announce great profits being made. Many of the things identified by us while indeed are unnecessarily injuring the Fallers are also a complete hindrance on our production. Why are we bogged down in other people's brush and debris or walking countless unproductive miles to get to the next patch of wood to fall if money is so tight?

There have been some calls made by company accountants with regards to 'snagging' out forest access roads that, while they were a cost cutting measure, should never have been made. It's inevitable; someone will get hit by a Faller cutting a snag down because the roadway was not blocked off properly due to cutbacks on some of these contracts. Because of current Industry structure, that Faller becomes liable.

There is truly a conflict going on between the MOF - WCB - Forest Companies with some of the new harvesting techniques with the Province's Fallers caught right up in the middle of this bureaucratic gap. We feel that one agency may not be familiar with the other one's policies; we like to think we've let that 'cat out of the bag'. Let's sit down and sort this out! We know from our consultation process that companies have drafted up Safe Operating Procedures (SOP) to be viewed and have been passed by WCB on how

they plan to safely conduct some of the 'new age' harvesting methods. **Soon as the Board gives these their seal of approval and turn their back, the SOP's are not even remotely being followed. This isn't right.**

The people with the title of supervisor could prove to be a cure all for many of the injuries that take place in our woodlands. At current the forest sector is very weak to the point it is nonexistent with many outfits in the supervisor/ safety department. When hiring supervision in the form of a bullbucker, it must be stressed by all entities farther up the management chain that, "We expect you to look after the well-being of the Fallers you are in charge of." All Licensees (including BC Timber Sales) must have a safety person touring their harvesting operations. This person must be able to take the voice of the workers directly back to the CEO of the company or Ministry on a regular basis.

**Non-compliance of safety matters will no longer be openly tolerated!**

The WCB has got to make their presence known on a far more regular basis; this is why things have slipped to the point they are at present. No more warning phone calls allowing the bad actors time to straighten things up enough to pass an inspection. Start playing hardball with the industry. This message will have to come from the upper reaches of WCB. **If these Companies knew that they will no longer be able to get away with their shenanigans, things would clean up in a very short period and stay that way.**

We would like to thank everyone that took the time to read this report. **In order to bring the number of faller accidents down in the province of British Columbia, its contents are going to have to be taken very seriously by all.** Our organization is more than willing to work with industry, government and WCB to assist in implementing any and all of the recommendations we have made.



**From left to right, Roger Harris, Minister for the State of Forests, Roy Nagel, CEO, Central Interior Logging Association, Roberta Ellis, VP, Investigations, Policy and Review, WCB, Mike McKibbin, Chairman, Western Fallers Association, Jim Shepherd, CEO, Canfor. We all happily got together for the launch event of the BC Faller Certification Project and the BC Forest Safety Council in Prince George during the Fall of 2004. Can we stick together for the implementation of the Western Fallers Report and truly bring the Fallers accident rate down? I don't have the answer to that.**

The WFA truly has a vested interest to bring Faller fatalities and accidents down. While it was Workers' Compensation Board of BC whose statistics and numbers have brought Industry attention to the Fallers, any one of us could go out tomorrow and become part of those very same facts, devastating our own family's lives!

## 13 Terminology

**Back barring:** A method used by Fallers which involves cutting with the top edge of the saw guide bar. Just about all of us do this. This method has become quite controversial as the new BC Faller Training Standard does not promote this. Fallers through out the Interior have been back barring since ever, mainly to keep Employers happy.

**Ballooned or ballooning:** The action of a Faller falling full length trees directly down a slope to get them away from the backline on a setting. This is done to speed up the harvesting process for grapple yarders as the timber is now out in the opening. This method is known to break wood and create a mess; some Employers promote this, others would fire us if we did this on their jobs.

**Bullbucker:** A falling crew's boss or the head Faller with an outfit.

**Conventional:** Usually refers to a method of harvesting being done by either a grapple yarder or steel spar but can also be used when referring to some ground lead systems, such as skidders and cats; it really depends on what part of the province you are in.

**Crummy:** Truck or bus used to transport Fallers to and from work.

**End Haul:** Describing the action of loading and hauling away excess rock and dirt created by road building.

**Face:** The strip of standing timber along the edge of the opening where Fallers will be working. An experienced group of Fallers will have the 'face', no matter how long it may be stretched out, going up the hill evenly, making their job easier.

**Felled and Bucked (F+B):** The timber laying out in the opening, after it has been felled, had the limbs removed and has been sawn into the designated lengths according to Company bucking spec. cards. Processed wood ready to be harvested by a piece of equipment.

**Ground Based System (GBS):** Any form of harvesting that takes place using a piece of machinery which moves trees or logs one ground level. Skidder, cat, hoe, loader or horses are all Ground Based Systems.

**Jack Strawn:** A patch of crossed up trees, generally a mess. These can be created naturally in the form of blow down or by an inexperienced Faller while trying to perform his duties. The same effect can be obtained by ballooning.

**Murphy's Law:** A facetious or satirical proposition stating that if there is the possibility of something going wrong, it will.

**Processing:** The act of turning a full length tree with limbs attached, into logs, ready for harvesting or shipping. This is done either in the bush by Fallers or on the road by a buckler or mechanical processor.

**Quarter:** The area, patch or strip of timber that a Faller(s) will be found working in. A face is comprised of a series of quarters stretched out.

**Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI):** A soft tissue injury such as, tendonitis or carpal tunnel syndrome, brought on by doing the same motion over and over again. With Fallers, it could be the act of wedging or flipping a saw over to finish falling a tree.

**Rigging Buck:** When a log or piece of blow down is partially sawn through by a Faller to cripple it up enough so when harvesting is taking place it will break and allow itself to be moved, instead of remaining in place and becoming a hindrance to yarders or other machinery.

**Right of Way (RoW):** The opening where road construction takes place. The initial cut through standing timber. Road allowance.

**Runaway:** Generally a full length tree but could also be a bucked log that spins around on a side hill and skids downwards, end first, gaining devastating speeds.

**Setting:** The work area where a logging operation is underway. Can also be called a 'block'.

**Snagging Out:** The action performed by a Faller where all snags (dead, dry trees or remnants of) are felled from either around a setting or a roadway, to make things safe for the other workers coming in behind the Fallers.

**Safe Operating Procedures (SOP):** These are drafted up by a Company when they want to operate outside the boundaries of WCB's regulations. Also known as SafeWork Practices.

**Timber Tippers:** Large hydraulic jacks specifically designed to aid Fallers with trees that have a heavy lean in the opposite direction to which they are to be felled.

**Tree Length:** Referring to timber that has been felled and left, as is.

**Walking Wounded:** A Faller who has received an injury while working but is forced to continue working because of a lack/or denial of any support; many times battling with WCB for some coverage.

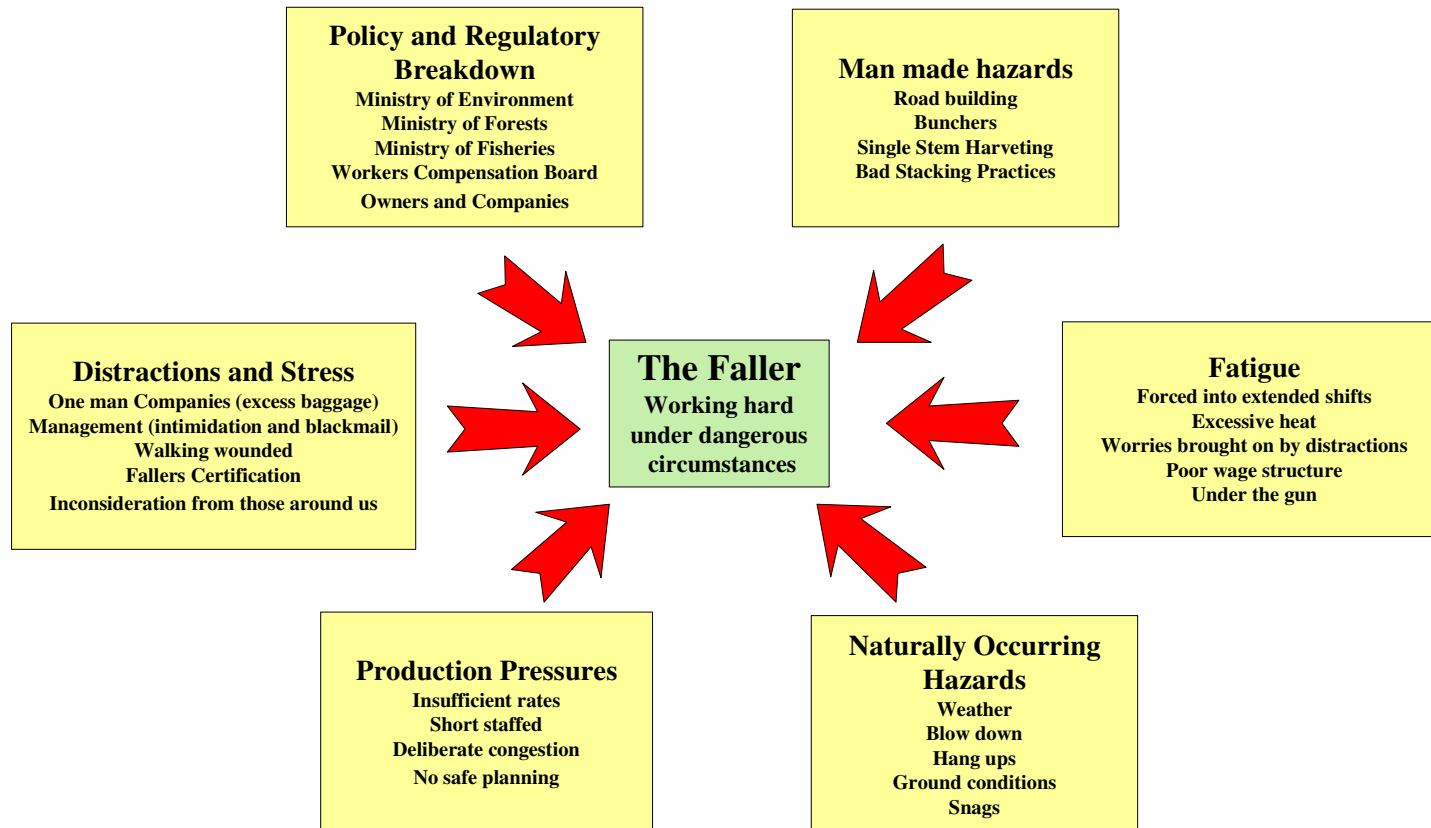


# 14 Appendices

## 14.1 APPENDIX A

### Fallers Cross Fire Chart

Put any worker who is already performing a strenuous, dangerous job in the cross fire of any (or all) of these negative factors pouncing on him it only stands to reason he will be involved in far to many accidents. Start removing these matters and you will begin to increase the chances of that worker having an accident free work day, it can not be helped.



## 14.2 APPENDIX B



**BC Forest Safety Council**  
*Unsafe is Unacceptable*

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Telephone 604-891-1259  
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May 22, 2005

Mike McKibbin  
Chair & President, Western Fallers Association (WFA)  
2301 Cramer Street  
Terrace, British Columbia  
V8G 2K6

Dear Mike:

**Re: Report by the Western Fallers Association on the causes and contributing factors to serious injuries and fatalities to fallers**

This is further to the special meeting of the Council's Board held recently in Vancouver.

The Council would like to work with and support the Western Fallers' Association to develop a report that would consider the causes and contributing factors to injuries and fatalities to fallers.

This review would consider all factors that your members consider relevant. We would also anticipate that the review would include examples of best practices with the industry and recommendations for change and improvement.

Your organization can provide the Council with the expertise and knowledge of your members who are involved on a day-to-day basis in the falling of timber and the pressures and constraints that they are experiencing. I would like to underline that we are interested in all of the concerns that your members have and that you should not feel constrained in the development of the report to leave out anything considered of importance to your members.

In the next few days I would like to review the nature of the support and timing.

We look forward to working with you on this important initiative.

Yours Sincerely,

Tanner Elton

For the BC Forest Safety Council  
*Unsafe is Unacceptable*

## 14.3 APPENDIX C

### ***WORKERS COMPENSATION ACT Sections and Regulations***<sup>1</sup>

We have taken 13 sections and 35 Regulations and reproduced them for this report. Our observations as Fallers out in the field tell us that these policies are not being followed to the point they may as well be non-existent or have become archaic due to the current structure of the Forest Industry, particularly toward independent Fallers.

All through the document you just read we gave indication of policy and regulatory crossovers, making many of the situations created by some of the new methods of harvesting a complete impossibility for the Faller to operate within WCB's guidelines. If we wanted to really dwell on these facts, we could have pulled out many more; these are merely to give our readers a bit more of an idea what's going on with the falling community.

#### **Division 3 – General Duties of Employers, Workers and Others**

##### **General duties of employers**

- 115** (1) Every Employer must
- (a) ensure the health and safety of
    - (i) all workers working for that employer, and
    - (ii) any other workers present at a workplace at which that that employer's work is being carried out, and
  - (b) comply with this Part, the regulations and any applicable orders.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), an employer must
- (a) remedy any workplace conditions that are hazardous to the health or safety of the employer's workers,
  - (b) ensure that the employer's workers
    - (i) are made aware of all known or reasonably foreseeable health or safety hazards to which they are likely to be exposed to by their work,
    - (ii) comply with this Part, the regulations and any applicable orders, and
    - (iii) are made aware of their rights and duties under this Part and the regulations,
  - (c) establish occupational health and safety policies and programs in accordance with the regulations,

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts from the *Workers Compensation Act*, the Occupational Health & Safety Regulation, Guidelines to the Act and the Regulations – available at <http://regulation.healthandsafetycentre.org/s/Introduction.asp> or via the WCB's website at <http://www.worksafebc.com>.

- (d) provide and maintain in good condition protective equipment, devices and clothing as required by regulation and ensure that these are used by the employer's workers,
- (e) provide to the employer's workers the information, instruction, training and supervision necessary to ensure the health and safety of those workers in carrying out their work and to ensure the health and safety of other workers at the workplace,
- (f) make a copy of this Act and the regulations readily available for review by the employer's workers and, at each workplace where workers of the employer are regularly employed, post and keep posted a notice advertising where the copy is available for review,
- (g) consult and cooperate with the joint committees and worker health and safety representatives for workplaces of the employer, and
- (h) cooperate with the board, officers of the board and any other person carrying out a duty under this Part or the regulations

### **General duties of workers**

- 116** (1) Every worker must
- (a) take reasonable care to protect the worker's health and safety and the health and safety of other persons who may be affected by the worker's acts or omissions at work, and
  - (b) comply with this Part, the regulations and any applicable orders.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), a worker must
- (a) carry out his or her work in accordance with established safe work procedures as required by this Part and the regulations,
  - (b) use or wear protective equipment, devices and clothing as required by the regulations,
  - (c) not engage in horseplay or similar conduct that may endanger the worker or any other person,
  - (d) ensure that the worker's ability to work without risk to his or her health or safety, or to the health or safety of any other person, is not impaired by alcohol, drugs or other causes,
  - (e) report to the supervisor or employer
    - (i) any contravention of this Part, the regulations or an applicable order of which the worker is aware, and
    - (ii) the absence of or defect in any protective equipment, device or clothing, or the existence of any other hazard, that the worker considers is likely to endanger the worker or any other person,
  - (f) cooperate with the joint committee or worker health and safety representative for the workplace, and
  - (g) cooperate with the board, officers of the board and any other person carrying out a duty under this Part or the regulations.

### **General duties of supervisors**

- 117** (1) Every supervisor must
- (a) ensure the health and safety of all workers under the direct supervision of the supervisor,
  - (b) be knowledgeable about this Part and those regulations applicable to the work being supervised, and

- (c) comply with this Part, the regulations and any applicable orders.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), a supervisor must
  - (a) ensure that the workers under his or her direct supervision
    - (i) are made aware of all known or reasonable foreseeable health or safety hazards in the area where they work, and
    - (ii) comply with this Part, the regulations and any applicable orders,
  - (b) consult and cooperate with joint committee or worker health and safety representative for the workplace, and
  - (c) cooperate with the board, officers of the board and any other person carrying out a duty under this Part or the regulations.

**Coordination at multiple-employer workplaces**

- 118** (1) In this section:
- “**multiple-employer workplace**” means a workplace where workers of 2 or more employers are working at the same time;
  - “**prime contractor**” means, in relation to a multiple-employer workplace,
    - (a) the directing contractor, employer or other person who enters into a written agreement with the owner of that workplace to be the prime contractor for the purposes of this Part, or
    - (b) if there is no agreement referred to in paragraph (a), the owner of the workplace.
- (2) The prime contractor of a multiple-employer workplace must
- (a) ensure that the activities of employers, workers and other persons at the workplace relating to occupational health and safety are coordinated, and
  - (b) do everything that is reasonable practicable to establish and maintain a system or process that will ensure compliance with this Part and the regulations in respect of the workplace.
- (3) Each employer of workers at a multiple-employer workplace must give to the prime contractor the name of the person the employer has designated to supervise the employer’s workers at that workplace.

**General duties of owner**

- 119** Every owner of a workplace must
- (a) provide and maintain the owner’s land and premises that are being used as a workplace in a manner that ensures the health and safety of persons at or near the workplace,
  - (b) give to the employer or prime contractor at the workplace the information known to the owner that is necessary to identify and eliminate or control hazards to the health or safety of persons at the workplace, and
  - (c) comply with this Part, the regulations and any applicable orders.

**Division 6 – Prohibition Against Discriminatory Action**

**Actions that are considered discriminatory**

- 150** (1) For the purpose of this Division, “**discriminatory action**” includes any act or omission by an employer or union, or a person acting on behalf of an employer or union, that adversely affects a worker with respect to any term or condition of employment, or of membership in a union.
- (2) Without restricting subsection (1), discriminatory action includes
- (a) suspension, lay-off or dismissal
  - (b) demotion or loss of opportunity for promotion,
  - (c) transfer of duties, change of location of workplace, reduction in wages or change in working hours,
  - (d) coercion or intimidation,
  - (e) imposition of any discipline, reprimand or other penalty, and
  - (f) the discontinuation or elimination of the job of the worker.

### **Discrimination against workers prohibited**

- 151** An employer or union, or a person acting on behalf of an employer or union must not take or threaten discriminatory action against a worker
- (a) for exercising any right or carrying out any duty in accordance with this Part, the regulations or an applicable order,
  - (b) for the reason that the worker has testified or is about to testify in any matter, inquiry or proceeding under this act or the Coroners Act on an issue related to occupational health and safety or occupational environment, or
  - (c) for the reason that the worker has given any information regarding conditions affecting the occupational health or safety or occupational environment of that worker or any worker to
    - (i) an employer or person acting on behalf of an employer,
    - (ii) another worker or a union representing a worker, or
    - (iii) an officer or any other person concerned with the administration of this Part.

### **Complaint by worker against discriminatory action or failure to pay wages**

- 152** (1) A worker who considers that
- (a) an employee or union, or a person acting on behalf of an employer or union has taken, or threatened to take, discriminatory action against the worker contrary to section 151, or
  - (b) an employer has failed to pay wages to the worker as required by this Part or the regulations may have this matter dealt with through the grievance procedure under a collective under a collective agreement, if any, or by complaint in accordance with this Division
- (2) A complaint under subsection (1) must be made in writing to the board,
- (a) in the case of a complaint referred to in subsection (1) (b), within 60 days after the wages became payable
- (3) In dealing with a matter referred to in subsection (1) whether under a collective agreement or by complaint to the board, the burden of proving that there has been no such contravention is on the employer or the union, where applicable.

### **Response to complaint**

- 153** (1) If the board receives a complaint under section 152 (2) it must immediately inquire into the matter and, if the complaint is not settled or withdrawn, must
- (a) determine whether the alleged contravention occurred, and
  - (b) deliver a written statement of the boards determination to the worker and to the employer or union, as applicable.
- (2) If the board determines that the contravention occurred, the board may make an order requiring one or more of the following:
- (a) that the employer or union cease the discriminatory action
  - (b) that the employer reinstate the worker to his or her former employment under the same terms and conditions under which the worker was formerly employed;
  - (c) that the employer pay, by a specific date, the wages required to be paid by this Part, or the regulations;
  - (d) that the union reinstate the membership of the worker in the union;
  - (e) that any reprimand or other references to the matter in the employers or unions records on the worker be removed;
  - (f) that the employer or the union pay the reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred by the worker by reason of the discriminatory action;
  - (g) that the employer or the union do any other thing that the board considers necessary to secure compliance with this Part and the regulations.

## **Division 10 – Accident Reporting and Investigation**

### **Immediate notice of certain accidents**

- 172** (1) An Employer must immediately notify the board of the occurrence of any accident that
- (a) resulted in serious to or the death of a worker
  - (b) involved a major structural failure or collapse of a building, bridge, tower, crane, hoist, temporary construction support system or excavation,
  - (c) involved the major release of a hazardous substance, or
  - (d) was an incident required by regulation to be reported.
- (2) Except as otherwise directed by an officer of the board or a peace officer, a person must not disturb the scene of an accident that is reportable under subsection (1) except so far as is necessary to
- (a) attend to persons injured or killed,
  - (b) prevent further injuries or death, or
  - (c) protect property that is endangered as a result of the accident

### **Incidents that must be investigated**

- 173** (1) An employer must immediately undertake an investigation into the cause of any accident or other incident that
- (a) is required to be reported by section 172,
  - (b) resulted in injury to a worker requiring medical treatment,
  - (c) did not involve injury to a worker, or involved only minor injury not requiring medical treatment, but had a potential for causing serious injury to a worker, or
  - (d) was an incident required by regulation to be investigated.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply in the case of a vehicle accident occurring on a public street or highway.

### **Orders to stop work**

- 191** (1) If the board has reasonable grounds for believing that an immediate danger exists that would likely result in serious injury, serious illness or death to a worker, the board may order
- (a) that work at the workplace or any part of the workplace stop until the order to stop is cancelled by the board, and
  - (b) if the board considers this is necessary, that the workplace or any part of the workplace be cleared of persons and isolated by barricades, fencing or any other means suitable to prevent access to the area until danger is removed.
- (2) If any order is made under subsection (1) (b), an employer, supervisor or other person must not require or permit a worker to enter the workplace or part of the workplace that is the subject of the order, except for the purpose of doing work that is necessary or required to remove the danger or the hazard and only if the worker
- (a) is protected from the danger or the hazard, or
  - (b) is qualified and properly instructed in how to remedy the unsafe condition with minimum risk to the worker's own health or safety.
- (3) Despite section 188 (1), an order under this section
- (a) may only be made in writing, and
  - (b) must be served on the employer, supervisor or other person having apparent supervision of the worker or the workplace.
- (4) An order under this section expires 72 hours after it is made, unless the order has been confirmed in writing by the board.

**Sections 196 to 198 describe the measures that may be taken by the board if an employer contravenes the Act, regulations, or orders.** The following are key points from these sections:

#### **Section 196: Administrative penalties (summary)**

The board may impose an administrative penalty if it considers that

- an employer has failed to take sufficient precautions for the prevention of work-related injuries or illnesses,
- an employer has not complied with Part 3 of the *Act*, the regulations or an applicable order, or
- a workplace or working conditions are not safe.



Before imposing an administrative penalty, the board must serve a penalty notice on the employer. The notice must set out the basis on which the penalty is being considered, the amount of the proposed penalty, the employer's options to accept the penalty as proposed or to make representations to the board respecting the proposed penalty or the amount, and the time limit for giving notice to the board that the employer intends to make such representations (which must be at least 30 days after the penalty notice is served).

On receipt of a penalty notice, the employer must provide copies of the notice to the joint committee or worker health and safety representative, as applicable, and to the union, if the workers at that particular workplace are represented by a union.

The employer may accept the penalty or notify the board that the employer wishes to make representations respecting the matter. After considering any representations made by the employer, the board may impose an administrative penalty, unless the employer proves that due diligence was exercised to prevent the failure, non-compliance, or conditions to which the penalty relates.

The maximum penalty that can be imposed is \$519,502.08. The penalty is paid into the accident fund.

#### **Additional defence for workers**

- 216** A worker is not guilty of an offence if the worker proves that the offence was committed
- (a) as a result of instructions given by the worker's employer or supervisor, and
  - (b) despite the worker's objection.

#### **Section 225: Board regulations (summary)**

The board may make regulations it considers necessary or advisable in relation to occupational health and safety and occupational environment on the following topics:

- standards and requirements for the protection of the health and safety of workers and other persons present at a workplace and for the well-being of workers in their occupational environment;
- specific components of the general duties of employers, workers, suppliers, supervisors, prime contractors and owners;
- written policies or programs prepared by the employer respecting occupational health and safety and occupational environment;
- the regulation or prohibition of the manufacture, supply, storage, handling or use of any tool, equipment, machine or device or the use of any workplace;

standards and requirements for monitoring atmospheric or other workplace conditions or to demonstrate compliance with Part 3, the regulations or an applicable order or any other matter for which regulations to be made by the board are contemplated under the Act.

<b>General duty</b>	<b>2.2</b>	Despite the absence of a specific requirement, all work must be carried out without undue risk of injury or occupational disease to any person.
<b>Conflict with a Code or standard</b>	<b>2.3</b>	If there is any conflict between the requirements of this Regulation and any code or standard with which compliance is required by this Regulation, the provisions of this Regulation prevail.

- Small operations**      **3.2**      In any operation where the work force is less than that referred to in section 3.1 (1) the employer must
- (a) initiate and maintain a less formal program based on regular monthly meetings with workers for discussion of health and safety matters,
  - (b) ensure that meetings are directed to matters concerning the correction of unsafe conditions and practices and the maintenance of cooperative interest in the health and safety of the work force, and
  - (c) maintain a record of the meetings and the matters discussed.

### **Correction of Unsafe Conditions**

- Remedy without delay**      **3.9**      Unsafe or harmful conditions found in the course of an inspection must be remedied without delay.
- Reporting unsafe conditions**      **3.10**      Whenever a person observes what appears to be an unsafe or harmful condition or act the person must report it as soon as possible to a supervisor or to the employer, and the person receiving the report must investigate the reported unsafe condition or act and must ensure that any necessary corrective action is taken without delay.
- Emergency circumstances**      **3.11**      If emergency action is required to correct a condition which constitutes an immediate threat to workers only those qualified and properly instructed workers necessary to correct the unsafe condition may be exposed to the hazard, and every possible effort must be made to control the hazard while this is being done.

### **Refusal of Unsafe Work**

- Procedure for refusal**      **3.12**      (1) A person must not carry out or cause to be carried out any work process or operate or cause to be operated any tool, appliance or equipment if that person has reasonable cause to believe that to do so would create an undue hazard to the health and safety of any person.
- (2) A worker who refuses to carry out a work process or operate a tool, appliance or equipment pursuant to subsection (1) must immediately report the circumstances of the unsafe condition to his or her supervisor or employer.
- (3) A supervisor or employer receiving a report made under subsection (2) must immediately investigate the matter and
- (a) ensure that any unsafe condition is remedied without delay, or

- (b) if in his or her opinion the report is not valid, must so inform the person who made the report.
- (4) If the procedure under subsection (3) does not resolve the matter and the worker continues to refuse to carry out the work process or operate the tool, appliance or equipment, the supervisor or employer must investigate the matter in the presence of the worker who made the report and in the presence of
  - (a) a worker member of the joint committee,
  - (b) a worker who is selected by a trade union representing the worker, or
  - (c) if there is no joint committee or the worker is not represented by a trade union, any other reasonably available worker selected by the worker.
- (5) If the investigation under subsection (4) does not resolve the matter and the worker continues to refuse to carry out the work process or operate the tool, appliance or equipment, both the supervisor, or the employer, and the worker must immediately notify an officer, who must investigate the matter without undue delay and issue whatever orders are deemed necessary.

**No discriminatory action 3.13**

- (1) A worker must not be subject to discriminatory action as defined in section 150 of Part 3 of the *Workers Compensation Act* because the worker has acted in compliance with section 3.12 or with an order made by an officer.
- (2) Temporary assignment to alternative work at no loss in pay to the worker until the matter in section 3.12 is resolved is deemed not to constitute discriminatory action.

**Note:** The prohibition against discriminatory action is established in the *Workers Compensation Act* Part 3, sections 150 through 153. These sections of the *Act* are reproduced in the Introduction to Book 1 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, on pages xviii-xix.

## Impairment

**Physical or mental impairment**

- 4.19**
- (1) A worker with a physical or mental impairment which may affect the worker's ability to safely perform assigned work must inform his or her supervisor or employer of the impairment, and must not knowingly do work where the impairment may create an undue risk to the worker or anyone else.
  - (2) A worker must not be assigned to activities where a reported or observed impairment may create an undue risk to the worker or anyone else.

**Impairment by alcohol, drug or other substance**

- 4.20**
- (1) A person must not enter or remain at any workplace while the person's ability to work is affected by alcohol, a drug or other substance so as to endanger the person or anyone else.

- (2) The employer must not knowingly permit a person to remain at any workplace while the person’s ability to work is affected by alcohol, a drug or other substance so as to endanger the person or anyone else.
- (3) A person must not remain at a workplace if the person’s behaviour is affected by alcohol, a drug or other substance so as to create an undue risk to workers, except where such a workplace has as one of its purposes the treatment or confinement of such person.

**Note:** In the application of sections 4.19 and 4.20, workers and employers need to consider the effects of prescription and non-prescription drugs, and fatigue, as potential sources of impairment.

There is a need for disclosure of potential impairment from any source, and for adequate supervision of work to ensure reported or observed impairment is effectively managed.

### **Ergonomics (MSI) Requirements**

The purpose of section 4.46 to 4.53 is to eliminate or, if that is not practicable, minimize the risk of musculoskeletal injury to workers.

**Definition 4.46** In sections 4.47 to 4.53 (the Ergonomics (MSI) Requirements) “musculoskeletal means an injury or disorder of the muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, nerves, injury” or “MSI” blood vessels or related soft tissue including a sprain, strain and inflammation, that may be caused or aggravated by work.

<b>Risk identification</b>	<b>4.47</b>	The employer must identify factors in the workplace that may expose workers to a risk of musculoskeletal injury (MSI).
<b>Risk assessment</b>	<b>4.48</b>	When factors that may expose workers to a risk of MSI have been identified, the employer must ensure that the risk to workers is assessed.
<b>Risk factors</b>	<b>4.49</b>	The following factors must be considered, where applicable, in the identification and assessment of the risk of MSI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the physical demands of work activities, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) force required</li> <li>(ii) repetition</li> <li>(iii) duration</li> <li>(iv) work postures, and</li> <li>(v) local contact stresses</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- (b) aspects of the layout and condition of the workplace or workstation, including
  - (i) working reaches,
  - (ii) working heights,
  - (iii) seating, and
  - (iv) floor surfaces;
- (c) the characteristics of objects handled, including
  - (i) size and shape,
  - (ii) load condition and weight distribution, and
  - (iii) container, tool and equipment handles;
- (d) the environmental conditions, including cold temperature;
- (e) the following characteristics of the organization of work:
  - (i) work-recovery cycles;
  - (ii) task variability;
  - (iii) work rate.

**Note:** In work situations where a risk of MSI exists, typically only some factors from the list will be applicable. To assist, the WCB provides a risk identification chart in the publication 'Identifying MSI Risk Factors'.

- |                        |             |  |
|------------------------|-------------|--|
| <b>Risk Control</b>    | <b>4.50</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The employer must eliminate or, if that is not practical, minimize the risk of MSI to workers.</li> <li>(2) Personal protective equipment may only be used as a substitute for engineering or administrative controls if it is used in circumstances in which those controls are not practicable.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Traffic control</b> | <b>18.5</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Traffic control devices must be put in place must be put in place before commencing operations and must be removed when they are no longer required.</li> <li>(2) Traffic control devices must be spaced at the intervals specified in the 'Traffic Control Manual' and signs must be located so as to allow motorists to come to a controlled stop, with due regard for the prevailing weather and road conditions.</li> </ul> |

# Forestry Operations

## General Requirements

- |                                |              |   |
|--------------------------------|--------------|---|
| <b>Planning and Conducting</b> | <b>26.2</b>  | The management of forestry operations must plan and conduct such operations in a manner consistent with this Regulation and with recognized safe work practices.  |
| <b>Initial Safety Meeting</b>  | <b>26.5</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) A crew safety meeting must be held before commencing work in a new area</li><li>(2) At the crew safety meeting, the workers to be employed in the area must be informed of potential hazards.</li></ol>   |
| <b>Dangerous trees</b>         | <b>26.11</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) If a work in a forestry operation will expose a worker to a dangerous tree, the tree must be removed.</li><li>(2) Trees that will interfere with rig-up, the movement of lines and equipment, or that could be pushed or pulled into the work area must be removed.</li><li>(3) Saplings over 6 m (20 ft.) tall, in an area where cable logging is being done, must be removed before yarding commences.</li><li>(4) If it is not practicable to comply with subsection (3), such as during partial cutting operations, alternate work methods or procedures which minimize the risk to workers may be used, and the work must be directed by a supervisor who has, as far as practicable, controlled the danger to any worker.</li><li>(5) Any dangerous tree in a forestry operation may be left standing may be left standing during operations other than construction or harvesting if<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) no significant ground vibrations are likely to be produced</li><li>(b) no work will be done within reach of the tree when wind speeds exceeds 20 km/h (12 mph) and</li><li>(c) a tree assessor who has completed a training program acceptable to the board determines that the tree will not be dangerous to workers during planned activity.</li></ol></li></ol> |
| <b>Slope limitations</b>       | <b>26.16</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Equipment must not be operated on a slope exceeding the maximum specified by the manufacturer of the equipment or a professional engineer. <b>(This subsection was repealed in 2003; serious consideration should be given to its reinstatement, loss of this reg. has left things wide open for Industry to create many man man hazards we spoke of by bunchers).</b></li><li>(2) If the equipment manufacturers maximum slope operating stability limit is not known, written procedures that have been developed</li></ol>   |

specifically for the worksite to ensure machine stability must be followed.

(3) If information specified in subsections (1) or (2) is not available, the following limits apply

(a) rubber tired skidders must not be operated on a slope which exceeds 35%

(b) a crawler tractor, feller buncher, excavator and other similar equipment must not be operated on a slope which exceeds 40%

(c) any other forestry equipment specifically designed for use on a steep slope must not be operated on a slope which exceeds 50%.

**Weather conditions**

**26.17** When weather conditions create hazards to workers, additional precautions must be taken as necessary for the safe conduct of the work.

**Landslides/ avalanches**

**26.18** In a forestry operation where there may be risk of a landslide or avalanche

(a) the risk must be assessed in accordance with a standard acceptable to the board,

(b) if a risk is found to be present, written safe work procedures must be developed meeting the requirements of the standard, and

(c) workers must be educated in the safe work procedures.

## **Falling And Bucking**

**Faller Qualifications**

**26.21** (1) An employer must not allow a worker to fall or buck trees until the worker has demonstrated to the employer that the worker is qualified.

(2) to determine whether a worker is qualified to fall or buck trees, the employer must apply the standards of a training program that is acceptable to the board.

**Faller training**

**26.22** (1) A worker in a forestry operation must, before commencing work as a faller, receive training for falling that is acceptable to the board.

(2) The requirements of subsection (1) are deemed to have been met if

(a) the workers has performed falling duties regularly for at least 2 years before April 15, 1998 and

(b) the fallers activity is evaluated at the worksite and the worker is certified as a competent faller by a qualified supervisor or trainer and

(c) the worker passes a written or oral examination on falling in the presence of a qualified trainer.

(3) Unless subsection (2) applies, a faller's training must include

- (a) a period of basic training in falling trees, of a minimum of 30 days working, one on one, with a qualified trainer,
  - (b) a written or oral examination on falling in the presence of a qualified trainer and
  - (c) after passing the examination, working as a trainee faller under the close supervision of a qualified faller or trainer for a period of 180 days, or for a lesser period if the person supervising is satisfied the worker is competent.
- (4) The person supervising the fallers training must
    - (a) keep weekly records of the trainee's progress, and
    - (b) certify in writing that the trainee is competent
  - (5) The training required under sub sections (1) to (3) must be documented in a manner acceptable to the board, and a copy of the documents made available to the worker concerned or an officer, upon request.

**Procedures**

- 26.23** The employer must ensure that fallers and buckers follow written work procedures that include safe work practices for
- (a) minimum and maximum distances between fallers and other workers
  - (b) controlling the fall of trees and dangerous trees
  - (c) bucking
  - (d) using lines and jacks to fall trees
  - (e) summoning and rendering assistance to deal with a difficulty or emergency, and
  - (f) ensuring each fallers' well being at least every half hour, and at the end of the work shift.

**Responsibilities of fallers and buckers**

- 26.24**
- (1) Before a tree is felled, a faller or an operator of a mechanized falling machine must ensure that all workers are clear of the area within a circle centred on, and having a radius not less than twice the height of the tree.
  - (2) Before falling or bucking commences, the faller or bucker must ensure that obstructions to falling or bucking are cleared and a safe escape to a predetermined safe position is prepared.
  - (3) A tree must not be felled if it could strike any stationary or running line of any operational equipment.
  - (4) If it is necessary to pack or shovel snow to reduce stump height, the depth of the depression at the base of the tree must not exceed 45 cm (18 in)
  - (5) When falling a tree, the faller must ensure that
    - (a) a sufficient undercut is used



- (b) the undercut is complete and cleaned out
  - (c) sufficient holding wood is maintained
  - (d) the backcut is higher than the undercut to provide a step on the stump
  - (e) wedging tools are immediately available and, unless the tree has a pronounced favourable lean, wedges are set, and
  - (f) the tree being felled does not unnecessarily brush standing timber
- (6) A faller may only use one tree to cause other partially cut trees to fall in succession if
- (a) this procedure is being used to overcome a specific falling difficulty
  - (b) a wedge is driven into the backcut of each tree, and
  - (c) and only those trees necessary to deal with the falling difficulty are cut up.
- (7) When a tree starts to fall, the faller must move quickly to a predetermined safe position, at least 3 m (10 ft) away from the base of the tree where possible, and take cover where available
- (8) A buckler must ensure that all workers are clear of the hazardous area before a tree or log is bucked.

**Dangerous trees and logs**

- 26.25**
- (1) Falling or bucking must not be started if
- (a) a tree or log is in dangerous condition, or
  - (b) there is reason to doubt that the cut can be completed.
- (2) If a tree is not completely felled,
- (a) the faller or the operator of a mechanized falling machine must clearly mark the tree, discontinue work in the hazardous area, alert any workers who may enter the danger area, and notify the immediate supervisor, and
  - (b) the supervisor must notify all workers who might be endangered, and must take appropriate measures to ensure that the tree is safely felled before other work is undertaken in the hazardous area.
- (3) If a bucking cut is incomplete,
- (a) the buckler must immediately cut or mark a distinct cross on the top of each end of the log, and must notify the immediate supervisor at the end of the work day, and
  - (b) the supervisor must notify the yarding or skidding crew.

**Falling Dangerous trees**

- 26.26**
- (1) where practicable, dangerous trees must be felled
- (a) progressively with the falling of other timber but before falling adjacent live trees, and
  - (b) into open areas
- (2) When falling a dangerous tree,

- (a) dangerous bark must be removed, where practicable
  - (b) stump height must, in judgement of the faller, allow maximum visibility and freedom of action
  - (c) the tree must be felled in the direction of the lean whenever possible, and the undercut must be as deep as necessary to minimize the use of wedges and resulting vibration
  - (d) pushing with a green tree must only be undertaken to overcome a falling difficulty
  - (e) wedging over must be used only if there is no alternative, and after careful assessment of the ability of the dangerous tree to withstand wedging.
- (3) If conventional methods cannot be safely employed to remove a dangerous tree, blasting or other acceptable methods must be used.
  - (4) Falling, bucking or limbing activities must not be undertaken must not be undertaken in an area made hazardous by a leaning dangerous tree, or a dangerous tree which has been brushed by a felled tree, until the dangerous tree has been felled.

**Location of Fallers**

- 26.27**
- (1) Fallers and buckers must not work in a location where they or other workers will be endangered.
  - (2) A faller must not fall a tree in a normally inaccessible area if the fallers safety depends on a lifeline or similar device and the faller does not have the ability to move to a safe position.
  - (3) Subsection (2) does not preclude the use of a lifeline to prevent slipping or falling.

**Summoning Assistance**

- 26.28**
- (1) Qualified assistance must be readily available to faller in case of difficulty, emergency or injury
  - (2) Fallers and buckers must have an effective means to summon assistance.

**Entry to falling area**

- 26.29**
- (1) Only workers with associated duties may enter an active falling area.
  - (2) Before entering the active falling area, workers must notify the faller or buckers and wait until advised by the faller or buckers that it is safe to enter.
  - (3) A worker, other than the faller, may be at the base of a tree being felled if the worker is
    - (a) a supervisor or manager controlling the operation
    - (b) training as a faller, or
    - (c) required to assist the faller to overcome a specific falling difficulty.

<b>Traffic control</b>	<b>26.30</b>	If a tree being felled may create a hazard to a user of a travelled road, adequate traffic control must be used to stop or control approaching traffic.
<b>Location of Workers</b>	<b>26.39</b>	<p>(1) A worker must not remain within the bight of any running line tension, nor in a position where the worker could be struck by a line were it to break or come loose, or to be tightened.</p> <p>(2) A worker must be positioned in the clear to avoid being exposed to moving logs, saplings, root wads, chunks, rigging or other material.</p> <p>(3) A worker must keep clear of rigging which is stopped by an obstruction until the rigging has been slackened to reduce the hazard.</p>
<b>Equipment locations</b>	<b>26.57</b>	Mobile yarders and loaders must be positioned to ensure that no worker on the landing will be exposed to incoming or runaway logs or other debris.
<b>Creating Additional hazards</b>	<b>26.80</b>	Road or skid trail construction, including any blasting activity must be carried out in a manner that prevents hang ups, hanging broken tops or limbs, leaners, sidebind of pushed trees, or similar hazards which could endanger fallers or other workers.

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We'll put this section that we have chosen to reproduce into context now for all the entities who will be reading this report. As we mentioned on the head note, Fallers see these rules and regulations not being adhered to by the outfits we work for. The photos through out this document will aid to confirm this.

When we try to bring these items to their attention, many woods foremen and supervisors will openly announce that they were unaware that there is a regulation in place to deal with man-made hazards being created by road building, as well as putting themselves and other workers below us in the case of deliberate site congestion. If ignorance to these regulations was what these people were claiming before, we like to think they have now been enlightened by us highlighting them.

For the policy setters, which are mainly WCB and MOF, you've created quite a conflicting situation that the Fallers are caught right up in the middle of. We gave indication all through this document with reference to many of the new harvesting techniques that are going on. The Fallers are having quite a time trying to keep everyone happy and make it out of the bush safely after each shift. We like to think there has been adequate reference made to this now between the actual content of this report and this Appendix.

Many of our own people, the Fallers, are wondering where this 'go around' of Faller Certification has originated from. All the regulations pertaining to this have been reproduced by us to help answer that question, as you can see now, it's been in the works since 1998. It's just taken that long to get everything developed and caught up to the regulations and get it out to you. Many of the items which the new 'BC Faller Training Standard' has been structured on come out of other regulations to do with falling.

Where we have reproduced sections of the *Workers Compensation Act*, we feel there should be enough concern raised now to warrant a review of WCB policy with regards to the entire Forest Harvesting Sector, particularly towards Independent Fallers and the role they indeed play. Even though we are classified as Employers because we are running these one man companies, we are nothing more than Employees who have been stripped of any protective rights. WCB has drafted up (Division 6, sections 150–153) rules with regards to the Board being able to represent workers and their occupational health and safety problems that they may incur from their Employers. As an Independent in this day and age it sure seems fitting we should have some of those rights also.