

FALLER CERTIFICATION: DOES CERTIFICATION MEAN QUALIFICATION?

The British Columbia Forest Safety Council (the Council) was created in September 2004 to promote forest safety. The initial focus and tasks of the Council were set out in the report of the Forest Safety Task Force, which created a comprehensive strategy to dramatically improve the safety record of the BC forest sector.

The values, beliefs and commitments that form the basis of the Council and its work are set out in the Forest Safety Accord, whereby in the Commitment to Training and Supervision the accord says: *We understand the importance of workers being fully prepared for the work they do and the provision of competent supervisors who will insist on and enforce safe work practices. All workers on the worksite must be competent and fully trained and certified for the work they are performing.*

A key training program developed by the Council allows for new entrants to be trained as tree fallers, one of the early areas of focus for the Council.

The Council's new faller training includes a challenging and comprehensive 30 day program which involves classroom training, interactive exercises, reviews and evaluations and closely supervised field training involving all aspects of chainsaw operation, falling and bucking. After students successfully complete this portion of the training, they then complete up to 180 days of on-the-job training before applying for certification. With the 180 days of training under their belt, trainees can then challenge the certification exam which is administered by the Council. Upon successful completion of the exam, the Council then certifies them for the timber type(s) they are trained for and have experience in.

Last year, in an effort to ensure continuous improvement of the faller certification program inclusive of training, supervision and instructors they administered, and to ensure that it was robust and enduring, a review of the program and a

clarification of the roles and responsibilities around faller certification was sought with the support of WorkSafeBC.

Deloitte a consulting, financial advisory and risk management firm was asked to provide an outside perspective on the program and the relationship between the various parties when it comes to faller certification and training.

At the same time, Enform, the safety association for Canada's upstream oil and gas industry based in Alberta, is the advocate and leading resource for the continuous improvement of that industry's safety performance. According to their website; established by industry for industry, Enform helps companies achieve their safety goals by promoting shared safety practices and providing effective training, expert audit services and professional advice.

Enform also provides a faller training program that includes faller certification that addresses timber types and applications common in the Alberta oil and gas industry, such as right of way and well site clearing. WorkSafeBC has acknowledged the applicability of the training and certification they provide is consistent with the BC Faller Training Standard and thus acceptable to the Board as per the Regulation.

So the obvious question for TLA members is, "Does faller certification by Enform mean qualification to harvest BC timber types and does their certification meet the obligations under the regulations given that WorkSafeBC has acknowledged the applicability of the Enform faller certification in BC?"

The simple answer is that it may not and is a reality that many employers may not fully understand.



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The Council's faller certification always stipulates that their program, "certifies them (the faller) for the timber type(s) they are trained for and have experience in". This aspect of the program is consistent with Part 26.3 (1) of the WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation where it states: *(1) Every worker in a forestry operation must receive the training necessary to safely perform the worker's duties.*

When an Enform trained faller is asked to work on the BC coast, for example, there is a real risk that they may not be trained or qualified on the bigger old-growth timber types here, despite being "certified as a faller". In this situation, certification does not mean qualification.

In the end and regardless of the certification a faller may have, it is the employers' legal responsibility to ensure that the individual they hire to fall trees for them has the experience and the qualification to suit the timber types they are being asked to work in. If they do not and an incident occurs, then the employer will be held responsible for contravention of the WorkSafeBC regulation.

The Deloitte report will address these issues and may help to strengthen the training and certification programs currently in place to ensure that employers are clear on their responsibilities so that workers are not placed into situations not consistent with their training. Its public release is expected later this year.▲