

# Forest training, certification probed

Ombudsman to focus on highest-risk jobs  
— fallers and drivers — in his first review

BY JEFF RUD  
*Times Colonist staff*

Training and certification for two of the highest-risk positions in the forest industry will be the focus of a review by B.C.'s forest safety ombudsman.

Roger Harris said Thursday he will concentrate on fallers and truck drivers in his first formal project since being appointed forest safety ombudsman in March.

Harris is a former MLA for Skeena and onetime deputy minister of state for forest operations in the provincial Liberal government.

Of 43 to die in B.C. forests in 2005, seven were fallers and nine were drivers. Harris, a former faller himself, described

that work as the highest-risk occupation in North America.

The forest industry has changed dramatically in recent years and a comprehensive review is necessary to determine whether preparation for workers is keeping up, he said.

"Really, the purpose of this whole review is to see how appropriate [training and certification] is — how it's working," Harris said in an interview.

The faller certification program in B.C. was initiated in 2003. Experienced workers were grandfathered through written or oral exams and a field evaluation. Those who missed the deadline of July 31, 2005, are still being certified through full-day assessments conducted by the B.C. Forest Safety Council.

Non-experienced people seeking work as fallers must now go through one of two community colleges in the province. The campuses of North Island College in

Campbell River and Malaspina University College in Parksville each offer faller courses and more schools will follow suit. The 30-day course includes 10 days in the classroom and 20 days working in the field, followed by an evaluation and then up to 180 days logged under a certified supervisor.

Harris said everybody in the industry believes a certification process is necessary. "Right now, the industry certifies fallers. It's very new and in its infancy.

People already have opinions whether it's working," Harris said.

As for those who drive logging trucks, only a Class 1 licence is now necessary. Harris aims to determine whether that is adequate for complicated work in the forest industry.

"There are 19 different configurations of trailers in the logging industry," Harris said. "All of them act, obviously, different. But if the federal government funds a training program, they only fund it if you learn [how to drive] on the highway. And the next day, you could find yourself on the top of a mountain with a 30 per cent grade, hauling a trailer of any variety of configuration."

Harris chose training and certification as the first issue to review but there were a couple of other prominent themes that arose out of his initial travels around the province. Other areas that require examination include road maintenance and construction, along with the Worksafe

B.C. designation of a prime contractor at sites on which a variety of contractors are operating.

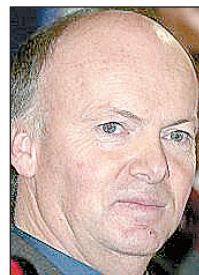
Ron Corbeil, district health, safety and environment co-ordinator for the United Steelworkers, which represents forest workers, said a recent Worksafe B.C. compliance pilot project shows 24 per cent of forest workers did not get effective training and 17 per cent were not being properly supervised.

"It's obviously an issue," Corbeil said of training and certification. "I'm not sure if it's [Harris's] domain. It's been identified that there is a lack of training."

Corbeil said problems with training have come with the influx of smaller contractors in the forest "that don't have the ability or the resources to do thorough training in some cases."

The forest safety ombudsman's review is expected to be made public in November.

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**Roger Harris:**  
Former MLA a  
onetime faller

## VIHA targets AIDS, hepatitis

\$1.5 million available  
to community groups

BY CINDY E. HARNETT  
*Times Colonist staff*

The Vancouver Island Health Authority, with a plan to reduce infection rates by 50 per cent over the next few years, will disperse \$1.5 million to communities proposing effective HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C prevention and outreach programs.

This comes on the heels of VIHA's release Thursday of a 67-page report called *Closing the Gap: Integrated HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Strategic Directions*.

On Vancouver Island in 2005, there were 47 new cases of HIV infection — most of whom were intravenous drug users. There were also 538 new cases of hepatitis C infection, also caused mostly by infected needles.

In 2004, 72 people tested positive for HIV infection and 457 for hep C.

"It's still high, any number of infections is too many," said Dr. Mark Gilbert, VIHA medical health officer. "The long-term objective is to reduce new HIV infection by 50 per cent and reduce hep C infection."

VIHA posted a request Thursday for annual proposals for a three-year contract. The proposal call ends Sept. 28 and contracts will commence in February. VIHA is looking for community proposals for effective services aimed at preventing HIV/AIDS and hep C — and offering help to those already infected.

"What we're looking for is services to decrease new infection and link people to more support services," said Gilbert.

"We want to identify successful organizations and develop programs with them," Gilbert said. Those services might include anything from education, advocacy and HIV testing to condom disbursement, needle exchanges and outreach to vulnerable and remote populations.

The public-health component of prevention and outreach services is just one part of the health authority's larger program of providing treatment and examining new options, such as a secure drug injection site.

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"We want to solve this once and for all," says Sean McNulty, general manager of Island View Golf driving range in Central Saanich. *Ray Smith/Times Colonist*

## Driving range hits on possible solution

More netting may end  
long dispute with farm  
over errant golf balls

BY KIM WESTAD  
*Times Colonist staff*

Wendy Fox casts a wary eye at the towering crane on the driving range next door to her family's bustling farm market in Central Saanich.

The crane is being used to add up to 16 metres in height of netting to the driving range — netting that might finally make peace between neighbours both trying to earn a living on agricultural land.

Will the addition, which will leave the Island View Golf driving range with the highest netting in Canada, finally cure the problem that has divided the Central Saanich businesses?

"I hope so, I really hope so," Fox says wearily. She has been working full tilt, getting the family's signature Silver Rill corn to market, and has grown tired of

picking up golf balls on about five acres that she can't plant because of the safety hazard caused by errant golf swings.

The balls fly over the current 26-metre netting, into the Silver Rill cornfield on one side and a hay field on the other. Fox said she has gathered 16,000 balls in the last year-and-a-half.

"This is not only a farming issue. I cannot walk on the land between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. without risk of being hurt by a golf ball," Fox said.

She can't ask workers to tend to crops on the land, because they, too, could be hurt. So the land hasn't been planted for the last two seasons.

Driving range general manager Sean McNulty says he "just wants to get along. We want to solve this once and for all."

McNulty, too, hopes the netting will mean the end to a problem that has seen the neighbours, who have never actually met face to face, fighting in court and before the Agricultural Land Commission.

The commission ordered the driving range to raise the height of the netting

that is supposed to keep the balls on range property. Depending on the slope of the land, the netting will almost double in some areas.

McNulty said a mathematician and golf expert were hired to study the problem.

**"I cannot walk on the  
land between 9 a.m.  
and 9 p.m. without  
risk of being hurt."**

Wendy Fox,  
Silver Rill farm

With the new netting, "99.9 per cent of the balls will stay within the netting."

Even before the upgrade, the netting already was three metres over the industry standard, he said.

About 20,000 golf balls are hit on average each day at the popular driving range.

This season, the range has been restricted to using only its lower deck.

The upper deck, with lounge chairs and a view of the water, was shut down by the commission because its height meant more balls were escaping the property.

Once the new netting is complete, likely the second week in August, the upper deck will be open, too.

McNulty said lost balls cost the range 50 cents each.

The total cost of the netting, including experts' reports, is about \$250,000, he said.

"We're here to stay so it's in all our best interests to get along and make this work," McNulty said.

He suggested that Fox simply does not like the idea of a driving range next door to the farm.

Fox scoffed at this, saying: "I just want to be safe, and have my employees safe, and be able to use my land."

The Foxes even went to court, winning an injunction forbidding the driving of golf balls onto their property.

Fox said they will go back to court in August, alleging that the injunction has been breached by the range.

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