



# SafeTalk



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## Scathing Report on BC Forest Industry



District 3 Director Steve Hunt (back to camera) and representatives from Wood Council locals met with the BC Auditor General Review Panel in February of 2007. Photo Norm Garcia

B.C. Auditor General John Doyle released a scathing report on forest industry safety last week, saying there has been a failure to make the woods safer for workers despite a 2003 government commitment to cut the number of deaths and serious injuries.

"The government's efforts are just being implemented and have not yet proven to be effective," Doyle states. "There has been no detectable impact on rates of death and serious injury."

Launched in response to Steelworkers' campaign against conditions causing death and injury in forestry, the AG's report confirms much of what the Steelworkers' have said is wrong and what should be done. District 3 Director Steve Hunt said; "The report confirms our assessment that a systemic *culture of desperation* followed deregulation of the forest sector and shift to widespread contracting out under Gordon Campbell's Liberal government. Contracting led to a race to the bottom".

Tiny firms cut prices to compete for contracts, notes the report; this "disables the safety infrastructure" and "splits the responsibility for profit from the responsibility for safety."

With 90 percent of firms in the industry now between one and three employees, forest licensees can shirk responsibility, downloading safety onto to contractors who are both ill-equipped to handle it and under constant pressure to cut costs.

While deregulation reduced regulatory oversight and supervision, corporations also reduced supervision of sites or handed responsibility to contractors who again, can't afford proper safety training or management, the report adds. Deregulation also caused fragmented authority without vigorous enforcement of regulations. The AG supports USW's call for more inspections, more follow-up and *punishment* for non-compliance. Indeed, the AG's report is largely *about* responsibility. Government, it says, should reassert regulatory responsibility for an industry which "tolerates danger, values independence and expects no supervision" and in which "economic drivers remain a threat to safety..." -Recommendations – Page 2

## Coming Events

February 14 Family Violence Workshop, Terrace BC

May 11-15 National HS&E Conference, Toronto Ontario

## Research Links Workplace Stress is to Heart Disease

Published in the 'European Heart Journal', the research is the first large-scale study to look at the cardiovascular mechanisms of work stress in the population and provides the strongest evidence yet of the way it can lead to coronary heart disease (CHD).

Dr Tarani Chandola, a senior lecturer at the University College London Epidemiology & Public Health and the lead author of the study, said: "Stress at work is associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease but the mechanisms underlying this association have remained unclear until now." The study found that stress can lead to CHD either directly, by activating stress pathways controlled by the interaction between the nervous system, the endocrine glands and their hormones (neuroendocrine mechanisms), or indirectly via its association with unhealthy lifestyles.

The researchers collected evidence on the incidence of CHD, deaths from CHD, non-fatal myocardial infarctions, angina, heart rate variability, morning rises in the levels of the 'stress' hormone cortisol, the metabolic syndrome and behavioural risk factors such as diet, exercise, smoking and drinking.

Dr Chandola said: "During 12 years of follow-up, we found that chronic work stress was associated with CHD and this association was stronger among both men and women aged under 50 – their risk of CHD was an average of 68 per cent more than for people who reported no stress at work. The research is part of the long-running Whitehall II study, which has been following 10,308 London-based civil servants since 1985.

## 100,000 Die in China Work Accidents in 2007

More than 100,000 Chinese died in workplace accidents last year, including on the roads and railways, but the figure was down one-tenth on 2006, a senior official said Friday.

Li Yizhong, head of the State Administration of Work Safety, said 101,480 people died but that government education and publicity campaigns were paying off. Accidents in coal mines and the roads showed the largest improvement, Li added.

China's coal mines are the world's deadliest, with fatal accidents taking place almost on a daily basis as mine owners push productions beyond safety limits to pursue profits.

Li said many problems remained.

"One is that the implementation and propagation of the concept of safe development and of safe production policies is not deep enough," he said. "The work of some localities and work units is still superficial." Supervision and safety inspections were carried out unevenly, Li added.

## Summary of Auditor General's Recommendations

- 1) Assign one ministry to lead in issuing of policy change
- 2) Ministry of Labour and Citizen's Services (MLCS) ensure a robust safety infrastructure
- 3) MLCS bring self-employed forest workers under province safety regs
- 4) MLSC ensure mandatory pre-qualification requirements for firms
- 5) Government somehow provide economic incentives rewarding safe operators
- 6) Safety regulation be vigorously enforced by WorksafeBC
- 7) Government seek direct input from other natural resource-based industries ie. mining
- 8) Robust safety planning in all aspect of forest operations be made mandatory
- 9) Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR) seek two amendment to foresters act: a) worker safety explicit object; and b) define practice of forest professional
- 10) Enforce supervision requirement on all forest workers; including faller and truckers
- 11) Enforce safe use of resource roads
- 12) Training relative to known risk be made mandatory; ie. Off-road driving, tree blasting
- 13) Identify safe work hour limits for high risk forestry occupations
- 14) Consider ways of better protecting forest workers during work-time travel
- 15) Lead ministry coordinate sharing and consolidation of data and statistics; ie. Fatalities, serious injuries, near-misses

Link to the report <http://bcauditor.com/AuditorGeneral.htm>

### Local 1-423 H&S Education Conference



Ray Hudon, left, from the BC Federation of Labour out of local 1-3567 and local 1-423 1st vice-president Pat McGregor lead the Basic OH&S workshop. Close to 100 local health and safety activists attended the conference in Kelowna BC. There were workshops in Basic OH&S, Accident Investigation and Advanced OH&S. In his opening remarks local president Bruce Gardner talked about the locals commitment to health and safety and his desire to see stronger contract language dealing with health and safety. He pointed out that the presence of so many participants showed the local members commitment.

## Renewing Resources for Safer Communities Invitation to Attend Free Health and Safety Sessions

Family violence is a health and safety issue and it can have a direct impact and cost on the workplace in terms of morale, productivity, and absenteeism. Free one-day sessions (lunch provided) throughout the province are being offered that will prepare union stewards, health and safety reps, and management to respond in a meaningful way to the hidden workplace issue of family violence. Participants will be able to implement effective and proactive responses to family violence issues that employees or co workers might be dealing with. Participants will gain the ability to identify the risk of violence while learning how to safely and respectfully intervene.

Participants will be given a CD ROM that includes a power point presentation to be used at the work place; fact sheets for employees/co-workers; other materials that can be revised and printed. The resources that have been developed for the sessions will facilitate easy delivery of violence prevention education to all industry employees. Information provided will also include how to provide assistance to both the abused and abuser; how to support co-workers who know of abuse going on around them but who feel helpless to do anything; and how to facilitate referrals to existing community supports.

The pilot session will take place in Terrace on Thursday, February 14<sup>th</sup> at Northwest Community College located at 5331 McConnell Avenue.

In early March sessions will be held in:

Powell River – Wednesday, March 12<sup>th</sup> at Malaspina University College, 3860 Selkirk Avenue;

Hope – Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup> at the Hope Golf and country Club, 900 Golf Course Road; and

Delta – Monday, March 17<sup>th</sup> at the Delta Town and Country Inn, 6005 62B Street.

Subsequent sessions will be held in Nanaimo, Campbell River, Kamloops, Kelowna, Fernie, Nelson, Williams Lake, Quesnel, Fort St. John, and Prince George.

This initiative is being delivered by [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org) and [www.erabc.com](http://www.erabc.com).

For more information call 604-633-2506 250-559-8831 or email [renewing@qcislands.net](mailto:renewing@qcislands.net)

### Local 1-423 Co-Chairs Discuss Health & Safety Strategy



On January 25 thirty local union co-chairs met with local H&S Director Dave Welder and District HSE Coordinator Ron Corbeil. Issues discussed included; effective committees/basic awareness, MSI/ergonomics, Young Workers/ New Workers Awareness, Air quality issues, collective agreement language and research.

**National HS&E Conference May 11-15 Toronto, Ontario**