Being sad is not enough

A proposal to end the plague of serious injuries and fatalities in the BC forest sector

THERE IS A SAFETY *CRISIS* IN THE FOREST SECTOR

Logging and wood manufacturing have always been considered among the most dangerous industries anywhere. From 1993 – 2002 in logging alone there were **250 fatalities in British Columbia**. The most dangerous jobs are falling and log hauling: from 1998 – 2002 there were 26 fallers and 24 log truck drivers killed on the job. And the situation is getting ***worse, not better.*** In recent months we have seen **more serious injuries in sawmills and yarding and loading** than anywhere else.

Today, while companies try to lower medical-incident rates, our industry has seen a **highly disturbing increase in fatal and near fatal accidents. Over 30 workers have already died on the job this year**. It's out of control and we have had enough. We **never again** want to hear the words: *"safety is paramount, but..."*

TIME FOR *ACTION*, NOT WORDS

Steelworkers are glad that government acted on our request for a *Forest Safety Task Force.* We will continue to play an active role in the BC *Forest Safety Council*. **But it's time for action, not just more talk.**

We urge the provincial government to *immediately* take the following action:

1. Ensure **more timely investigations** of serious accidents and workplace fatalities, as well as **immediate mandatory coroner's inquests** following any fatal accident in our industry;
2. Create **implementation committee(s)** with the authority to order immediate workplace changes in response to fatality investigations and inquests;
3. Increase **Workers Compensation Board monitoring and enforcement** activities;
4. Ensure that the WCB Act puts the **ultimate responsibility on licensees** for enforcing safe practices;
5. Aggressively pursue **full enforcement in BC of Bill C-45 (Westray Bill)**; and
6. Declare a **"day of mourning"** every time there is a fatality in the forest and wood -products

These measures together would send an appropriately strong message to industry stakeholders. There **must be significant change.** Only strong measures will **end the plague of serious injuries and fatalities**. But even that is **not enough**. We need to ***do more*** and we need to ***do it now***.

The United Steelworkers also recommend a high-level *"summit"* of key industry stakeholders with real power to make recommendations and take immediate action to avoid any more fatal accidents in our industry. This summit must be mandated to identify the *real* causes of the unacceptable rate of death and serous injury in the wood sector. It should consider recent industry restructuring; legislative change; contracting out; workplace fatigue; technological change; workforce demographics; training; de-unionization and recent changes to regulation and enforcement.

Neither industry nor the marketplace alone can correct the situation. **Steelworkers urge government to take the lead. It is up to them to ensure that the devastation ends in the BC forest sector. We urge the government to take action now -- before more lives are lost**.

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