

# B.C. logging deaths spark debate

*Last Updated: Thursday, July 9, 2009 | 9:30 AM PT* [Comments](#)[Recommend](#)[0](#)

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A spike in the number of loggers dying in B.C.'s woods has alarmed their union, but the province's forestry minister says the numbers could be misleading.

The United Steelworkers Union says 10 tree fallers have died in the past 18 months, compared with no such deaths in the previous two years.

Ron Corbeil, the union's health and safety co-ordinator, blames the deaths on the lack of designated supervision and insufficient on-the-job training.

"We were puzzled, you know. How could you go from no fatalities in 28 months to eight within a year?" asked Corbeil.

Pat Bell, B.C.'s forestry minister, said any death is alarming, but 18 months is too short a time period to accurately indicate a trend.

"A few accidents in a short period of time can be misleading in terms of statistical evidence. Typically in this sort of thing, you would look at a three-year window," he said.

Bell said the province is making improvements in safety by focusing on certification programs and education. But he said it takes time to convince workers that safety should be a priority.

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