

Western Fallers Association (W.F.A.)
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To the F.S.T.F Implementation Team,

Re: Teleconference on March 30th, 2004

The W.F.A recently had its' Board meeting in Vancouver. The points that I'd like to bring forward in this memo were presented to me collectively from our group based on the six papers that came out and a few pages of notes I took during the meeting. Though some of these points may seem to criticize, they are intended for constructive purposes and should be considered.

The meeting itself proceeded fine, however, it did seem that there was quite a pile of briefing material shipped out for this group to review for a one and a half hour phone meeting. Does everyone actually read word for word what is being shipped out? Fortunately, things seemed to level out and mainly dealt with the infrastructure, which is where everything should start. On my own personal note, it would have been nice to have an in person meeting for the first go around. There are some people involved with this group that I haven't met and it's always nice to put a face to a name or voice.

On the subject of the infrastructure, the model is perfect. We all know who F.I.S.A. is and I know they are trying hard right now to cater to everyone. To dismantle them and start over again is only going to add discredit to what we are trying to achieve. There has been a lot of time, effort, work and resources put into this institution; don't throw that away and 'reinvent the wheel' so to speak. When I discussed the options with our group, they all agreed it would be 'par for the course' to start from scratch on a central Safety Association. Let's fix it! They are in place, with some very credible staff and a good spread of people out of the logging industry on their Board. To say that they are duplicating what we are already doing may not be quite accurate when it comes to the falling community. The W.F.A. has 2 Board members with falling contracts on C.F.L.A. claims. They have both stated that we get maps and quality checks from the company but when it comes to safety and training etc., we are on our own.

With this, 'Safety is Good Business' paper, there is talk of rate incentives for good actors. Is it even possible to get this down to the outfits we represent? I'll give you a scenario, which actually happened, and not that long ago. There was a fresh patch of blow down that happened in this area. Instead of giving it the appropriate time to settle, the mill sent a contractor into it almost the same week. The Prime had the falling contracted out, who in turn, used independent fallers to do the job. There were 14 lost time accidents, that came out of that one block, to the falling crew. Broken arms, broken legs etc. None of these actions showed up on the primes or the main falling contractors experience ratings, it was buried in the Manuel Tree Fallers CU. See what I'm getting at. By the way, this same scenario could be used to question a few things that crop up through those briefing papers.

Fallers Certification and Training. I went into quite a bit of detail at both our W.F.A. Board meeting and our A.G.M. I will say that with the way things are going to date and the somewhat gloomy picture I had to paint, the W.F.A. still stands behind faller certification, 100% rock solid. That was a surprise. Having said that, I know there are a lot of fallers out there that don't like the 'Grandfathering' program for one reason or another, just ask Mike Nielson from W.C.B. We can actually see this being a small piece of the strategy to bring the accident rate down in the falling community. It was brought to my attention by a few people, one of them being an MLA with a falling background, that the level of expectations for what this program is suppose to accomplish might be set a little to high with some of you. This will not be a cure all for fallers' accidents. As one of our directors put it, "We are out there dismantling Mother Nature, sometimes she can be unforgiving towards us for doing this". We looked over the three options for implementation and still agreed that the one with the least head-aches attached to it was option 3. We know it's been shot down, but trust me when I say, if this program was ever going to be a success provincially, in a realistic and timely fashion, this was the only option we had. Anything else undermines the program. It was brought to my attention by a colleague with a separate organization, that consideration should be given to possibly letting go of the grandfathering program. As stated earlier, the W.F.A. doesn't particularly stand behind this way of thinking but, given the 'cons' that seem to be erupting on a daily basis, i.e. nobody wanting to pay, growing distension between the fallers and

W.C.B., the extended time frame for implementation and the fact that the mid to upper ninety percent are going to pass anyway, maybe dropping the grandfathering should be considered and just get on with properly training the next generation, it's too bad.

The issue of industry self- policing itself was touched on briefly. I believe that would have come out of the Supervisor Qualification paper. This is where a huge number of accidents possibly could be avoided. Having the personnel who are running these jobs actually trained to know and understand what a safe jobsite should look and run according to W.C.B. standards. Right now, when we show up for work you may or may not have a tail-gate meeting. The boss feels like he's done his duty, then proceeds to send you off the low side of the road, through a jack-strawn, suicidal mess of road building debris. Nine times out of ten there could have been an effort to clean up the man-made hazards but it just seems to be overlooked. This one is even a violation of a regulation. I recently asked one foreman if we could get a stretch of timber cleaned out. The loader was parked right there. His reply was "There's no loader man around, just do your best, you guys do it all the time". Anyway, I went on about my business of falling this strip and trying to avoid being caught up in a chain reaction event as the trees came down on the logs I was running around on. The foreman showed up a little later and took a look at this. He got me to stop work and proceeded to say "Maybe you could go down the road for a while, I better move that timber. The stumps you're leaving are going to be too high to get the machine down in there to hoe chuck that piece". It turns out, he could run the loader and when all of a sudden there was a production issue involved, the wood could be moved. We do have a long way to go before self policing good safety policies is put forward of company production policies.

We recently had our AGM in Vancouver. At this meeting there was a discussion about our membership. It was brought to my attention that there is quite a number of Independent fallers out there that want to join us but are scared to because of repercussions from the people we work for. I found this a little odd. The W.F.A. has always been very upfront about what we are; we're a health and safety organization representing all fallers and particularly Independents. We have a strict constitution that we run off of that has been openly available to anyone who wants to read it. I relayed on what Mr. Enns mentioned the other day in the meeting about the W.F.A. being a role model for what could be up and coming in industry, with all the workforce having to be a member of one safety organization or another. I like to think that member took that back to his co-workers.

Enough said for the time being. The Western Fallers Association does appreciate the opportunity to participate as part of the Implementation Group. I do personally thank anyone who takes the time to read this memo. I don't know if I will be able to participate in the next meeting as I do have to get out and fall a bit of timber to feed my family. I do have 2 more quick questions.

1. How many CEO's have actually been out to one of their logging sites?
2. Where have the WCB officers gotten to? We never see them anymore.

Respectfully yours,

Mike McKibbin, Chair
Western Fallers Association

Cc WFA Board