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Dave Rowe, Prevention Division  
Workers Compensation Board

Dear Dave,

I would like to take a moment here and touch base with you on a subject that Randy Shoop and I have discussed with you once before; that being the "push" that some contractors feel is necessary to put on the fallers. The reason I chose to bring this same subject up now will become apparent as you read on.

The company that I am currently working for is a good one; the owner of which has made it quite clear that his main concern is for the fallers to walk out of bush under his own steam at the end of every shift. This is the way it should be, but unfortunately is not always so.

There was an accident that took place in the Terrace area about a week ago in which a faller, Jim Savard, was hurt while falling on a right of way job. I am not sure as yet of all the details but I have heard that Jim's injuries will leave him a wheelchair patient for the rest of his life. I have also heard that there were problems with the Medi-Vac of Jim after his accident, which has caused W.C.B. to spend lots of extra time inspecting this prime contractor's jobsite. The purpose of this letter is to ensure that the W.C.B. looks both deep enough and in the right direction in its investigation of this contractor.

I worked for this same contractor about 14 years ago and it was definitely apparent even then that if you did not literally 'run' for the guy who had the falling contract then you were not welcome to work there. Though I quit this job after only two weeks, I saw in that short span of time, several fallers get injured. Most of these injuries were caused from 'running for the almighty cubic meter'. These working conditions have not changed at all over the years. Both the owners of this company and his woods foreman are known faller abusers amongst our community. There are nine fallers working here at my current job in Cuthbert Creek and we all have had similar experiences or have heard of the abuse towards fallers by this same company. Even though neither one of them has the health nor the brains to go out and do what 'their' fallers are doing, they both feel it is their right to run these fallers into the ground.

I know from talking to a fellow here in camp with me that this outfit does not work on the fair and reasonable bid system. What they did was to hire a young, very inexperienced lad to take on the falling contract for way too little money, thereby forcing him to take it out on whatever fallers he can find to work for him. This is not right. The money is there and I know it does not have to be this way.

This falling contractor had approached me once before because this same prime contractor was threatening to cut his rate. I told him that there was not much I could do and that he had best stand up to his boss. I do not know what the final outcome was. I know for a fact that when the independent fallers show up on a job that it is a huge financial favor to these guys as it is. I don't see why these fallers should be forced to literally run through their work, quite possibly missing or creating hazards. All nine of the fallers here in this camp know this falling contractor is definitely pushing his crew unnecessarily. He will spy through the bushes making his crew nervous when they are working, when this isn't going on he will be off creating his own hazardous mess or doing some absolutely crazy thing for the Woods' Foreman. The way this outfit operates, it is a percolating disaster waiting to happen to the independent faller. We are NOT 'expendable units' to be run into the ground. Here are a few suggestions from the fallers:

1. Have a W.C.B. Inspector on site with this crew for the next month or two to ensure these fallers are not being abused.
2. Suspend the use of independent fallers on this prime contractor's job site forcing him to use payroll fallers for more of his own blood money out of pocket.

I have been informed that there actually have been fallers that have reported these working conditions to W.C.B.; I don't know if this is true or not. Regardless, Dave, the fallers would like to see something done about this matter. Below are the names of fallers that have read this original draft and have felt it to be accurate.

Sincerely,

Michael McKibbin Independent Faller for 25 years

Matt MacDonald 14 years experience  
David Breen 22 years experience  
Rod Hayes 12 years experience  
Kevin Albert 21 years experience

Ken Hystad 17 years experience  
Bud Palmer 20 years experience  
Mel Johnston 35 years experience  
Herb Johnson 24 years experience

c.c. Gerry Paucette W.C.B. Assessments (604) 244-6161  
Ella Young W.C.B. Risk Management (604) 231-8661  
Nick Hadikin W.C.B. Inspector (250) 615-6633  
Randy Shoop Independent Faller (250) 842-6964  
Bill Sauer N.W.L.A. Manager (250) 635-6801  
Ian May C.O.F.I. (604) 687-4930  
K'Shian Construction Company President (250) 635-7976  
Darrel Wong I.W.A. President (250) 334-2662  
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