

24 Hours

Fallers felled by lack of safety

B.C. forests have become a death trap for tree fallers, says a new report that blames the entire industry, the Workers' Compensation Board and the Forestry Ministry.

A "whatever it takes to get the job done" attitude by contractors means fallers are dying, says Mike McKibbin, chairman of the Western Fallers Association. Four have died already this year, and 59 in the last 10 years. "This is turning our forests into death zones," McKibbin told reporters yesterday. "This is already one of the most dangerous occupations in the world." Fallers who complain are often ignored in the business, where companies are limited on when they can cut trees, McKibbin said. "They'll find somebody younger to do it . . . in a lot of cases you'll be let go." McKibbin is asking the Ministry to extend the season for issuing permits, and the WCB to step up their enforcement. Tanner Elton of the B.C. Forest Safety Council said B.C. forests were unsafe compared to regions such as Washington, Alberta and Scandinavia. "We don't compare particularly well with other jurisdictions," Elton said.

- Irwin Loy, 24 hours