

Nothing new about the dangers facing fallers

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As a veteran of nearly 30 years in the logging industry, I think this sudden concern over fallers is a bit much. Compared to earlier years, the death stats appear normal.

Fallers have always been the biggest casualties. It's the nature of the job. No tree would ever come down if one took into account all the possibilities of things that might go wrong.

In the 1970s, there were 50,000 union members in B.C., effectively most of the industry. And it was not uncommon for 50 to die in the forests every year, many of them fallers.

Now the membership and the industry is half that size and produces the same volume of wood.

Much of that is done with more small, non-union companies, often staffed with less skilled workers. Yet there seems to be fewer fatalities.

I'm not minimizing the dangers facing fallers. They are real and often changing, depending on working conditions and logging methods.

There are also the added dangers springing from alcohol use, drugs and sheer bravado.

It's hard to assume there is an inherent problem with the way work is being done in the forest.

Not all accidents are from working conditions or practices, or indeed from stupid mistakes.

They can also stem from unforeseeable circumstances, a common danger in the woods.

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CREDIT: Les Bazso, The Province
Felling trees has always been one of the most hazardous occupations in B.C.'s forests.