

March 7, 2005

## Chairman's Overview

As this is the first publication after both the WFA Annual General Meeting and the Board of Directors Meeting in January, the bulk of the content will be what went on at both, along with any decisions and work that's been done since.

We'd like to once again thank the members that took the time to come out and see us and help make AGM # 2 a raging success. We had a couple of speakers show up to shed some light on what's going on with the Fallers Certification Project and the BC Forest Safety Council, as well as a couple of guests from the Steelworkers and PennCorp. Everyone got along fairly well with a minimum of outbursts taking place.

Tanner Elton, the CEO of the BC Forest Safety Council was full of apologies afterwards for losing his cool

to one of the Board members that called him on part of his presentation. I'm still snickering to myself a month later, over one of the members challenging Daryl Wong, President of Local 2171.

Hey, what do you expect, it was a fallers meeting!

Before we get too far along and forget to mention, next year's meetings will be held the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend of January in Nanaimo, details will follow as the season progresses.

There is a problem that has just come to light about a week and a half ago with regards to 'Heads Up', the newsletter that was published last fall. On the article headlined 'Certification Deadline Looms', there has been a misprint made on the cut off dates for the \$150.<sup>00</sup> registration fee to be certified. It should have said

December 31<sup>st</sup>, not March. The fee from January 1<sup>st</sup> until March 31<sup>st</sup> is 250.<sup>00</sup>. The publication company has told me that they were having computer problems with the memory during the compiling of that letter which is what caused this. Having spent a pile of time typing on one of these things, I quite understand how something like that can happen, my humblest apologies for that one. Except for one very distraught housewife I had the pleasure of speaking to, those of you that BC Fallers forwarded to me to talk to about this matter have been most understanding, thank you.

Once again, sorry for any inconvenience this error has caused you!

Respectfully yours,  
Mike McKibbin, Chairman  
Western Fallers Association

## Faller Training & Certification

The 'Grandfathering Project' is proceeding along.

Some corresponding numbers to date are as follows: 628 on the Coast, 232 through the Northern Interior, 500 through the Southern Interior and 72 for

the Pilot have been certified. There are still 1746 waiting, some not so patiently.

As of the compiling of this memo, the powers that be are tentatively shooting for a November 31, 2005 completion date, with the

understanding that there will be some stragglers still kicking around to catch up with. This is do-able, although not easily.

There has been another Advisory Committee as well as an Executive Committee

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for Fallers Certification and Training struck up out of the Forest Industry to help tweak the process and turn Fallers certification into something that will live up to everyone's expectations.

This group met for the first time on January 25-26 in Victoria, with Al Lundgren, a retired company faller as Chairman, and Bill Bolton, who's temporarily jumped ship from WCB, as the Project Supervisor.

The new group hashed out a number of things, some still have to be discussed, and here they are.

With regards to back barring, when you are doing your test, **don't!** Demonstrate with a set of full wrap handlebars that you can fall with the saw pulling to the tree, not pushing on the operator. From here on in any trainees will be shown to fall in this manner. We all back bar, we all know this but there has to be a line drawn when it is acceptable.

It's still going to be a couple of months before you see your wall mount certificates and tickets. We believe BC Fallers is sending a memo out to the Falling community with regards to this. There were problems with building the database which we're all about to become part of.

With respect to those that applied, stepped up to the plate and earned their certificates, there had to be anti-fraud mechanisms installed in both the tickets and certificates for those that would choose to sit down and stamp these out on

their computers one evening.

We've seen the certificates, they're sharp! They will be mailed to you in a wooden frame made from 'beetle wood'. We believe this is the main hold-up as it is going to take the company that long to produce that many frames.

The tickets, as far as we understand, will have 3-5 levels (we're still bashing this one around), depending on timber size, and 3 categories, depending on slope, as well as restrictions to Interior tree length falling or unrestricted for the fall and process Coastal guys.

For those of us that got tested in timber and grade below what are true capabilities are, this is currently being dealt with, don't panic. Upgrading will be a lot more accessible than the initial 'Grandfathering' you went through. Depending on what your ticket says, this will not be a hindrance to you personally.

What this will mean is your supervisor (or whoever hired you) will have to make damn certain that you are qualified to be in the type of timber and ground that he's put you in. If not, it will be up to that supervisor to take the time (we've found anywhere from 3 days to 2 weeks, all depending) to sufficiently train a guy up or find another Faller with the appropriate qualifications. This one little matter is going to throw a definite wrench into some of these 'gypos' grand scheme of things.

There's one matter that we're going to touch on here that

some of you are aware of and lots aren't; this would be the annual user registration fee that will be attached to being a Certified Faller.

Our organization didn't greet this with open arms and we continue to balk at it for a number of reasons.

This fee is due to be implemented starting 2006, when you'll be asked to pay \$75.<sup>00</sup>. It will go up gradually for the next several years, topping out at \$150.<sup>00</sup> annually. This money is needed to help sustain the thing.

**What thing**, you're asking? Well, right now to date, that's a bit of a blur, even to us. We know there is a database that will need to be maintained by a person or 2, along with an office, along with upgrading of tickets.

One thing we at the WFA have maintained, is that asking the Fallers for more money this close to having shelled out for the 'Grandfathering Project' is just plain bad timing.

In short, it would have been nice to have actually seen the thing doing something for us, whether to get the culls out of our job or wage stabilization, just to mention a few things that we have anticipated it doing.

Because this call has been made by the BCFSC, we have asked for a breakdown from them explaining just what it is we're going to get for this fee; that seemed like a fair place to start.

We will confirm that they have requested close to

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\$600,000.<sup>00</sup> annually for the next several years in their budget proposal to WCB for Fallers Certification, indicating that a large part of the cost for the next little while will be carried by the Forest Sector.

Where did this come from? It was part of the sales pitch that was made last fall to get the Licensees and a few others on board with the project through the BC Forest Safety Council. Without the people that we work for recognizing what it means to be a Certified Faller, we were no further ahead than the last attempt at this in the early '90's. It put us in a 'Catch 22' situation.

Why don't we like it? We've already mentioned a few reasons; a couple more are the principles attached to it, the fact that there are fallers throughout the province that, after their overheads to operate as an Independent Faller are dealt with on a monthly basis, the only thing left to pay the rent and buy a bag of groceries with is a wage that puts them below the poverty line. This is a fact! We know it and have conveyed it to the people that made this decision.

This fee was brought forward at the AGM. Later on through the day and well into the evening, in one pub or another, our Chairman was approached by members who indicated that the user fee wasn't really an issue to be all too concerned about - it is more important to devote time and resources into fixing the thing. As one member put it: "I can piss twice that amount away in one night at the bar, this is f\*ck-all and will

eventually do something to help us as a group."

Thanks for the vote of optimism to that bunch. As a rule; this will get things accomplished a lot more readily than a bunch of bitching and whining.

Anyway, if you have any thoughts and comments on this or anything else as far as your job is concerned, feel free to post them on our website [www.westernfaller.com](http://www.westernfaller.com)

Click on 'Opinions', the rest is self explanatory.

Some people have already used this, and we're telling the rest of Industry to periodically drop in here to see what you have to say. Your input is valuable and you are assisting the Falling Community to interact amongst itself!

Industry is finally getting ready to Pilot the new Training Standard (which is where the Grandfathering came out of) at Courtenay on March 14th.

They've come up with 9 individuals willing to partake in the program, ranging from one guy right off the street with no bush smarts whatsoever, to a couple with limited falling experience already.

As the Training Standard will eventually be administered by Learning Institutes in the province, every criterion imaginable has to be explored in order to lay out some ground rules before it can be passed on to them.

Also, the first 3 QST's will go through this program to

upgrade to become Qualified Faller Trainers - they will become the guys that a college will get ahold of to present the course for them. Right now they've only been able to deal with seasoned fallers for the 'Grandfathering Project'.

They're going to put the Trainees through the 2 weeks of classroom time at the North Island College, then the 20 days 1 on 1 will take place in the field. After that, we believe it will be up to the individual to find placement in the Industry.

There has been concern shown by a few members of our group that there will be a flood of young guys entering the Falling Industry, therefore making it harder than it already is to find a job.

If you stop and think about this, in order to become a Faller now it's going to cost someone, (2000.<sup>00</sup> - 5000.<sup>00</sup>), whether it's the individual or through sponsorship.

Now, add on the tools and related equipment, the setting up of a company (because there are no payroll jobs any more), and the fact that it's just about impossible to make a respectable living doing this; I don't think there's too much to be concerned about.

Comparatively speaking, Industry has already turned the job of falling into a fairly unappealing occupation to enter into. Regardless of all the cons, trainees deserve to have a better shake of breaking in than a lot of us did. That is what this is all about!

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A representative from another organization stated at a meeting where the Training Program was being discussed a few weeks ago: "Who in their right mind would pay to become a

Faller when they could take the loot and become an electrician or go to the oil patch!" He has a valid point, but the bottom line remains that the days of some guy being able to pull into a job

(generally the worst operator in the valley) and pass himself off as a Faller because he has a couple of beater chainsaws and a 'Comp' number are coming to an end.

## Policies

A large part of why our group was formed was to make lives a little better for Independent Fallers, and get a few of the benefits back that we unknowingly shed when we became Independents.

We've mentioned a few policy changes that we would like to see happen, one with WCB with regard to the right to refuse dangerous work and the discriminatory actions that an employer can take against you (check the website under issues), and one with what has become the Steelworkers.

First off, WCB. The letters we submitted on our behalf are available for viewing on our website under 'Issues'. Because this was somewhat of an embarrassment on WCB's part when we identified this problem (they could no longer tell an Independent they would go to bat for him if he got in a jam over a safety issue with an Employer, where before they had), they took a look at it and responded quite promptly.

It turns out the issue affects about 23,000 Independent operators from within every Sector imaginable in BC. Unfortunately, because it is written up in the Workers

Compensation Act, it became a legislative matter, meaning it has to be dealt with at a Provincial Government level, which is where it is sitting currently.

We were advised last January that the Province won't be looking at any WCB policy review until after the election in the Spring and ,quite possibly, some time after that. This was a bit of a kick in the nuts, as there are quite a few of WCB's own people that would like this rolled over in our favour and, if it had of been a regulatory matter, we're confident the 'Board' would have stayed working on it to seek resolution.

We will continue to pursue this matter as best we can, when we have something to pass to you we will.

We've got much the same problem with IWA- Steelworkers. For those of us walking both sides of the fence, because of their Constitution, there's not much they can do as far as representing a guy in a jam with an Employer goes, either.

This one's particularly frustrating because some of us are paying a fair chunk of change monthly into their

fund to work at some of the biggest booby-hatches operating in BC.

How have we made out pursuing that one? Well, is where it sits to date. It was quite an endeavour just to find someone who was supposed to be in the know with the IWA-Steelworkers policy to address the issue over the phone. When we finally did find someone last month, the conversation got cut short, with a promise to phone back.

Did we receive a return call? Of course not! Anyway, they know the problem, they have for quite some time now and we do plan to get together with them, whether they want to or not.

There is a piece of policy that sits with Employment Standards with regards to pay periods and Independent Fallers that we have shared with individuals on separate occasions to help them out, that, quite frankly, the whole works of you should know about. Throughout the Province in various areas, some of the outfits we work for seem to figure we only need to get paid once a month.

Guess what? Providing you are an Independent running a

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company but having your gas, oil and ride supplied and paid by the day, it's your right, in the eyes of Employment Standards, to be paid at least every 16 days. They have forms that are available in any of their offices throughout the Province which you have to fill out, to identify yourself and the culprit you're working for. Having done this, they'll pursue the matter on

your behalf.

There's been a policy change with our Disability Insurance people at Penncorp with regards to helicopter rides as a means to get to work and unscheduled plane rides.

If you read the fine print when you signed on with them, neither of these areas was covered.

As of January, providing you are using a commercial helicopter company (VIH, for example) to get to the stump and when you get stuck with an unscheduled flight due to overloads or bad weather, we're covered with their policy.

There's a step in the right direction for the Fallers who signed up with Penncorp.

## BC Forest Safety Council

It only seems fitting to give these guys a slot in our newsletters for the next little while, as they truly have some grand plans with regards to worker safety.

Those of you that made it to the AGM and had a chance to listen to Tanner speak know that his plans are almost too farfetched to comprehend at this point.

There has been a series of meetings take place over the last month with the Council which brought in some very high profile speakers from WCB. The information of what went on at these meetings will become available on Councils website ([www.bcforestsafe.org](http://www.bcforestsafe.org)) in short order, but we'll give you the 'Readers Digest' version of what got discussed.

The first speaker they brought in was Sidney Fattedad, Senior VP of Finances for WCB. Though not everybody at the Council table seem to fully understand smashed up bodies and dads that don't make it home because they were killed at work, they all seem to understand money.

Sid made it quite clear to the Licensees that, regardless of whether you have farmed out all your work, Compensation Assessments still have to be paid from the timber being logged and, with Industry downsizing the way it is, WCB is not sustainable.

He brought forward the notion that, even though a lot of the work is done on 'contract'; the Sector has to look at 'back to work programs' (we used to call this light duty) to assist workers that can't return to their normal job just yet, but could be doing something productive for that company.

The Construction Sector, which is structured quite a bit like Forestry (just about all its' work is performed on a 'contract' basis) looked after that one on their own, for the plain and simple reason they value the workers they have and don't want to lose them to another company because they lost touch with the guy during the healing up period.

Peter Newman, area Director

for the North Island, gave a presentation on Compliance and Accountability. This one really created a buzz with the Licence Holders, as he made it quite clear that, up until now, they had always looked at what the individual worker had done wrong, or possibly gone after a foreman or bullbucker.

Now they will start looking at upper management, from owners clear through to the Licensee, to see what they could have done to prevent a serious accident or fatality.

There always have been Regulations in place holding these people accountable for our well being. What WCB is doing is pulling these out, blowing the dust off them and letting the whole world in on this.

Even if this amounts to nothing more than a scare tactic, it seems to have woken a few people up! And, no matter what anyone says about anything, there is nothing more that will help us get home after every shift than the Fallers looking after each other a little better!

## WFA Board Restructuring

It shall be noted that Bob Wells from Hope, BC no longer wished to keep his seat as a WFA Director due to personal reasons. We'd like to thank Bob for his input along the way and wish him the best with future endeavours. To maintain our 10 person headcount on the WFA Board, we welcomed Mr. Dave Gaskill from Nanaimo to join us. If you're noticing he has the same last name as our Secretary it's because they are husband and wife. We figured that Dave must have seen her having so much fun volunteering all her spare time to make our organization work; he just had to get in on the action. Welcome aboard Dave!

## Dates and Events

March 31 <sup>st</sup>	250.00 Fee for Certification closes, after that it's 600.00 to challenge the test
April 14 <sup>th</sup> - 16 <sup>th</sup>	Interior Loggers Convention, Vernon, BC
April 28 <sup>th</sup>	National Day of Mourning for Injured Workers, 20 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary
January 14 <sup>th</sup> - 15 <sup>th</sup>	Western Fallers Convention, Nanaimo, BC