

# The Beginning Newsletter

**WESTERN FALLERS ASSOCIATION (W.F.A.)**  
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You have just received your first copy of the Western Fallers Association (W.F.A.) news letter. The W.F.A. is a group of independent/contract fallers in the province of B.C. who have banded together to form this association. We are fallers representing fallers with their concerns to W.C.B. and industry. Our board of directors are all active fallers, you will more than likely recognise a name or two across the top of this page. We are registered in the province of B.C. as a non-profit organization to represent fallers. Many of you have been receiving letters from Mike McKibbin and Randy Shoop over the course of the last two years with regards to a battle that took place over the independent/contract fallers assessment rates with W.C.B. These two fallers now sit on our executive board of directors. If you are wondering how this letter reached you, we obtained W.C.B.'s mailing list for the 'manual tree fallers' classification unit (C.U.) with them. Don't worry, other than this mailing list, that's about the only ties we have to them. There's about 1200 of us throughout the province of which each one of you will get a copy of this. The W.F.A. recently had its first 'Board of Directors' meeting in Richmond and are now in a position to actively recruit members. For many of you, a lot of this letter will be old news as you were involved with fallers meetings in the winter of 2001 and became part of a mailing list then. For that group of fallers we are now taking things to the next level we have been promising for a while now.

**Where we came from:** In the year 2000 the independent/contract fallers assessment rates with W.C.B. started to go up at an alarming rate slated to top out at just over 20% of assessable income. One faller, Randy Shoop, began to voice his concerns over this matter the following June. For the next 7 months he wrote countless letters and made even more phone calls to try and straighten this issue out. He was gaining some ground and interest throughout the province with industry but it was a struggle. The task at hand was proving too big for one person. In the winter of that year he lobbied the support of another faller, Mike McKibbin. It was decided upon quite shortly after this that what was needed most was the support and backing of the fallers themselves. Fallers meetings were set up throughout the province by other fallers, some of which sit on the W.F.A board of directors still to this day. Many of you came to these meetings to hear what we had to say, gave monetary support to keep us going and got your own letters in to W.C.B. These meetings paved the way for an association known to W.C.B. and the forest industry as the Western Fallers Association. After 28 months of meetings with W.C.B. and industry reps and countless submissions by the fallers reps , Ralph McGinn, President and C.E.O. of W.C.B. notified us that the independent/contract falling community had gotten what we set out after, which was to turn the forest industry back into a one rate business. It was the only fair thing to do. This was not plain old good luck, this was not an act of good faith by W.C.B. This was a huge effort on the part of two fallers and what has come to be the W.F.A. There was millions of assessable dollars put back into the pockets of the independent fallers. Evidence of this win shows up annually with your assessment notices from W.C.B. As our C.U.'s base rate will continue to drop until the year 2006, others in the forest industry will come up to create one rate across the board . If you so decide to become a member of the W.F.A., you will have files of information made available to you as to just exactly what went on with this issue.

**What we have going on right now:** Representation! Right now we are known and recognised with the province of B.C, all three facets of W.C.B., their assessments department, prevention division and we are just getting ready to knock on the claims department door in a bigger way. The Interior Loggers Association, Northwest Loggers Association and Central Interior Loggers Association all know who we are and where we came from. We lobbied and got their support on the assessments issue. The same goes for Truck Loggers on the coast. Council of Forest Industries and Coast Forest and Lumber Association recognises the W.F.A. also. The I.W.A. has remained quite supportive of us even though we represent what they don't particularly like. Some of these organizations have given The W.F.A. thier blessings, others probably would just as soon see us shut up and go away.

W.C.B. has been developing a new training and certification program for quite some time now. Other than the actual development of the programs, W.C.B. will have very little to do with them, except enforce what they have come up with through regulation. Both of these programs will be administrated by the Forest Industry Safety Association (F.I.S.A.) out of Prince George. They are an industry funded organization with professional administrators who will look after the paper work and legalities. There has also been an advisory committee put together to aid in getting these programs out to you, the fallers. This committee is known as F.A.C.T.A.C. The W.F.A. keeps two of its directors along with other industry reps on this committee. They have been meeting once a month since last September to fine tune this program and start with the 'grandfathering' in of existing fallers in the province sometime this spring. The 'evaluators', as we have come to call them, will be coming out of the falling industry. They are active fallers and will already have passed the test they are giving you. They have been chosen by both a resume and an interview by a sub committee of F.A.C.T.A.C., of which one of the W.F.A.'s executive directors is part of. The W.F.A. directors talked about this in depth at our board meeting and concluded that for the most part it will be good to turn the job of falling into a certifiable trade. One thing that the W.F.A. did make sure of along the way is that you as an independent faller would not have to shell out money from your own pocket for your ticket. This certification process is going to cost \$500.00 per faller and will be billed back through all of industry by a .02 increase over two years on assessments. There will be further bulletins in the future as to what's going on with this, we will keep you posted.

One issue that has surfaced that the W.F.A. is looking into right now has to do with section 150 of the Workers Compensation Act. The right to refuse unsafe work and discriminatory action that may be taken by an employer afterwards. The way it sits now, an employee is covered quite nicely by W.C.B. or a collective agreement, but you as the independent faller, hired on through your own company, are not. There is a joint effort going on right now between Employment Standards and the I.W.A. for those independents working on union jobs. We are currently involved also with the W.C.B. Chief Complaints officer to see what comes out of there, and if need be, follow through with the drafting up of a new regulation to make sure the independents are covered. Roberta Ellis, the Vice President of W.C.B.'s prevention division dropped in to the W.F.A.'s directors meeting last week. We went over a subject that has come to be known to us as the 'walking wounded'; fallers who have injured themselves and who should be taking medical time off but don't because of the way the present system is structured. We know as fallers that this is and has been going on for along time. She took a pile of notes and did say she would take our concerns to the other V.P.'s at W.C.B. and get back to us. Whether anything can be done easily still remains to be seen, but at least talks are underway at a high level of W.C.B.

There was some pretty rough legislation passed last spring by our new government with regards to claims, etc. We're going to look into this further with one of W.C.B.'s senior lawyers and try and reason with Mr. Campbell, as an association. We all know that when an independent faller does make a claim it's usually pretty serious.

Right now we have listed off a few things that have been done or are being done to either put money back into your pockets or make your life a bit better as an independent/contract faller in B.C. A lot of you aren't even aware of these issues. It's awfully easy to sit back and say "these guys seem to be looking after me anyway, why would I want to join a fallers association". It will be that attitude that crashes and burns the W.F.A.! We know it was non-representation that got us into the jam with the assessments department a few years back. That issue alone would have been financially devastating to a lot of us. To date all of our actions have been largely funded by a very few fallers; it can no longer be this way.

Right now we have a web site partially developed. It will be up and running shortly and be very faller friendly. The internet has proven to be one of the most successful forms of communication between the directors over the last two years, we're sure you would use it also.

We're looking into a group extended health plan for members. There are some pretty good deals available when you approach these people as an association. The way things are right now with W.C.B., everyone should have extra coverage.

We did talk about getting into helping out members with claims and agreed it would be a good idea, but that will have to be down the road a bit. This whole operation is being run out of a makeshift office, on volunteer time, on the north coast of the province. In order to carry out the afore mentioned it takes a properly staffed office. We have the connections, we need the means.

**Who can join:** Any faller with your own W.C.B. number, whether you're an independent or a contractor with employees, should get on board. This is the group that we have been directly catering to over the last few years with our financial wins. Because we have been predominately set up as a faller's safety association, payroll fallers are more than welcome to join. A lot of our concerns with the Prevention Division of W.C.B. are going to benefit you also. The W.F.A. is all about fallers and falling. There are approximately 4000 of us in the province. Up until this point everyone we are around has wanted to dictate how we are suppose to be going about our business and it's not fair. We are involved in what has proven to be one of the most dangerous occupations on the globe and should have a say in what's going on with our job.

**Dues and registration fees:** It was decided by the W.F.A. directors to charge \$100.00 per faller annually. We've included a registration form along with this news letter. As soon as you become a voting member, you'll receive a contact list for our 'Board of Directors' and be kept up to date through news letters as to what's going on in the province as far as falling goes, be it good or bad. If this letter lands in your hands and you have never heard of us but would like to sit on the 'board', give us a call. There are two phone numbers on this letterhead, one rings at our chairman's house, the other at our secretary-treasurers. A fallers association has been talked about for a lot of years in a lot of camps by a lot of good men, here it is! The Western Fallers Association is up and running and doing business in the province of British Columbia, we urge you to join us.