

# President's Report

By Ian Emery, RFT



## President's Report: Living Safety

As I work on the engineering side of forestry, safety is always at the top of my mind. Even so, I hadn't planned on writing about safety until council had dinner with Reynold Hert, then CEO of the BC Forest Safety Council, and heard the passion he has for safety. Reynold and the Safety Council believe that integrating safety as a way of doing business will lead to a more effective and efficient work place because a safe workplace means fewer injuries, higher production, lower costs and better worker morale.

**Safety—what is our role as professionals?** Ask yourself—what are the implications of my work on the safety of others who rely on my work: site plans, road designs, etc.? There are some people who believe the planner is responsible for all aspects of safety, that we wear super-hero capes and have the power to be all-seeing and all-knowing. I wish this were true; however, reality is not quite as romantic and planners are actually forced to

be generalists within our specialized areas of practice. We are part of the team that must consider safety but we cannot be the experts at all times.

Dennis Bendickson, RPF, wrote an article on road safety in the last issue of BCFP. He stated that it was the professional's responsibility to understand the limitations of the vehicles which would use the roads we build.

Professional reliance comes into play here as the experts who use our plans to build the roads or to haul or harvest are relying on us to be competent and knowledgeable of the processes and phases, the equipment limitations and the hazards that may affect them. However, I believe that professional reliance is in fact a two-way street in that we in turn rely on these experts to carry out our plans and prescriptions and, through their expertise, recognize safety concerns that may arise during operations. Because we don't have x-ray vision to see in the rock or that hidden snag, there are hidden hazards and risks that we couldn't see. We are relying on them to deal with the situation and mitigate the hazard or bring us back in when it is beyond their expertise. We also need to make sure that we tap into their knowledge, promote dialogue and include them as part of the forestry team.

For example, I remember engineering a difficult area and running several different options. Later, I met with the trucking contractor and yarder operator in the bunk house and discussed the different options. The next day I had an optimized road location for hauling and yarding thanks to their help.

Our role in safety doesn't stop with the plan or prescription but flows out into a larger

part of our work and personal lives. A statement that I have taken to heart and try to live by is from my employer's safety values and beliefs: "Each of us is accountable for the prevention of injuries in our sphere of influence."

I found it interesting that I gravitated to Dennis Bendickson's article on road safety—it wasn't until I had finished the article and took a closer look at the pictures that I realized they featured roads I was responsible for. One was from a maintenance and deactivation aspect while the other was the full responsibility of the location, design, construction and use. Much like the experience Dennis wrote about in his article, I too have visited an accident site. This one was also a fatality and it was my road, I designed it and supervised the construction. The steepness of the road was a contributing factor but the equipment maintenance and driver training were the main factors. "Competences, due diligence and professional reliance: when applied to roads, the stakes are high," writes Dennis – and he is correct.

What role do you play in safety? If you answered: "None, I just write the prescription it's the logger who has to coordinate the safety." Think again, I firmly believe that as forest professionals safety begins with us. We are usually the first ones into an area collecting the information and creating the plans and prescriptions for the people following behind.

It doesn't end there. We are the visible leaders of safety, if we don't show that we consciously thought about safety in the creation of our plans how can we expect those around us to take safety serious? 🍀