

PROVINCE-WIDE STANDARDIZED RADIO CALLING PROCEDURES SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

By MaryAnne Arcand, TruckSafe BC

In response to the Coroner's Recommendations from the Leroux inquest this past July, and numerous crashes on resource roads because of incorrect radio use, the BC Forest Safety Council and its partner associations have initiated the development of standardized province-wide radio calling procedures.

A working group of truckers from around the province, as well as government and industry representatives, developed draft radio calling procedure in September 2007. In January 2008 an electronic survey provided truck drivers and other road users with an opportunity to provide input and make comments, before a standard is finalized by the Provincial Radio Communications Working Group.

Survey Results

902 surveys were submitted electronically, via the Zoomerang survey tool. In addition, 187 were received by fax, and a further 104 by email. The email submissions and many of the faxed submissions also contained comments and opinions from a variety of road users. A review of the email addresses and sources of faxes indicates that a broad variety of road users responded to the survey, including the forest industry, government employees, oil & gas employees, service companies and other interested parties such as guide outfitters and recreational users.

1. In your opinion, which of the following issues around radio use are the top three contributors to crashes or unsafe road use around the province?

Chatter	519	58%
Wrong channels and/or frequencies	305	34%
Different radio calling procedures	182	20%
Signage	200	22%
Power/wattage	15	2%
Vehicles without radios	323	36%
Radio-equipped vehicles not calling	394	44%
"convoy" calling – calling for more than one vehicle	25	3%
Changing channels too many times on one cycle	98	11%
Not being allowed to program your own radio	116	13%
Permission to use channels	19	2%
"scanning" while driving	136	15%
Other, please specify	172	19%

2. Is a province wide standardized radio calling procedure a good idea?

Yes- same procedure for everyone throughout the province	449	51%
There should be an allowance for regional variations	133	15%
There should be an allowance for both regional and local variations	303	34%
Total	885	100%

3. Do you agree with the logic behind the working group's recommendation to use "up" and "down" to indicate direction?

No way	141	16%
Partly	195	22%
Ok	184	21%
Guess so	59	7%
Absolutely	318	35%
Total	897	100%

Survey cont'd on page 52

Why change anything?

Radio calling issues have been identified as contributing factors in many near misses, crashes, injuries and fatalities on resource roads. People not calling, channels too crowded, inconsistencies from one area to the next, radios without the proper channels, too much chatter, and many more factors around radio use have created chaos and confusion across different areas. In these days of truck mobility, where drivers are often sent into new or unfamiliar areas with little notice, it is important to have a "default" set of guidelines that apply everywhere in the province. That way, no matter where they are, drivers will know what the default rules are, so they're operating safely until the other drivers on the road advise you of specific local rules due to geography, traffic volumes, etc. Specific local rules can and should supersede the default only when they provide superior safety benefits because of particular local issues.

While many truckers recommend getting rid of radios altogether, the fact is the road infrastructure and other road uses don't make that a practical or safe alternative. "Failure to properly transmit location" is an offence under the Ministry of Forests & Range Compliance and Enforcement Regulations (Sect. 5 (1)).

At the same time, there is work being done at the provincial level on changes to resource road radio frequencies, and standardized signage. In 2006, a Provincial Radio Communications Working Group was formed to improve the safety of B.C.'s resource roads by developing a new communications protocol. The Working Group is comprised of:

- BC Ministry of Forests and Range (BCMoFR), Resource Tenures and Engineering Branch
- B.C. Timber Sales (BCTS)
- BCMoFR, Information Management Group, Radio Operations
- B.C. Forest Safety Council, Forestry Trucksafe Program
- Industry Canada, Spectrum Information Technologies and Telecommunications.

The Working Group has proposed a block of dedicated resource road radio channels along with standardized call procedures and road signage. The new protocol is being tested by initiating two VHF radio pilot projects. One pilot project covers the Campbell River, South Island and Sunshine Coast Forest Districts and the other project is located near Tumbler Ridge in the Peace Forest District.

The pilots are being initiated in a series of stages. The BCTS Strait of Georgia Business Area finalized the project specifications for one area, the Tsitika network north of Campbell River, and put the new protocol into effect on January 1, 2008. Road systems on the South Island and Sunshine Coast will be brought into the program on March 1, April 1, or May 1, 2008. The pilot project in the Peace District will be initiated on the Ojay road network on May 1, 2008.

Radio calling procedures are part of these pilots, and the results of our survey have been taken into account as decisions are being made regarding default standards.

SOME OF THE FAXED & EMAILED COMMENTS

- How often vehicles should call their location depends entirely on road design, travel speed, width of road, corners, weather conditions, grade, number of turnouts, frequency of traffic, etc
- Drivers need to speak clearly, or more frequently, and not press the mic key down before they start speaking. I find



that I am constantly asking drivers to restate their location because they were not being clear enough the first time.

- Implement a fine system.

- We should get rid of radios completely
- I disagree with the thinking that a province wide radio protocol will make BC roads safer. Too much can go wrong with radio call procedures, miss calls, wrong channels, and the list goes on. Radios are a tool, and should not be relied on for the safety of road users. Too much just can go wrong. Referring to the list on the survey, I think it is one of the first questions? Drivers will drive to the radio, altering their driving pattern increasing their chance of having a serious accident by cutting corners on roads, and increasing speeds as they may misbelieve that they are the only one travelling on the road.
- The real issue is behaviour, speed and road design. We are instructed not to drive to the radio and to expect someone around every corner. This motto has worked very well for me as I can recall many incidents when logging trucks are required to call and they haven't for many different reasons. Thus avoiding collisions mainly because of reduced speed and that I have always stayed on my side of the road.

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to the people who work in British Columbia's forest sector. Everyone wants to get home safe at the end of the day.

The BC Forest Safety Council is working with employers and workers to improve safety programs and performance. We are training workers and companies to recognize and

manage the hazards of working in the forest.

The SAFE Companies program is now underway. Companies can register, have their safety programs audited, get certified and receive rebates on their WCB payments.

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- I would like to express another concern on radio usage. Highway trucks use our logging channels for their BS channels while travelling on the highways interfering with our road channels. They should either have to use their LADD channels or CB radios. eg. when they leave Prince George using a channel, it may be a Clearwater active logging channel when travelling thru here, may be a Kamloops logging channel when they hit Kamloops, etc.
- The biggest problem with radios is relying on the radio so you can drive faster than sight distance and stopping distance allows.

Large trucks should use radios to avoid operational delays; however, radios can never ensure it is safe to drive faster than conditions permit. You cannot ensure every radio is working and you cannot ensure every vehicle has a radio.

- I completed the survey but wasn't satisfied with some of the answer options. In relation to what information to give when calling, I don't think the type of vehicle needs to be said every time you call as you figure it out as you listen and every extra word from every driver will clog up the airwaves but it is good to know whether you are meeting a loaded truck or a pickup.

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4. How often should vehicles moving towards the highway call their position on the radio?		
Every kilometer	225	26%
Every two kilometers (on the even kilometer)	636	74%
Total	861	100%
5. Do you agree with the logic behind the working group's recommendation about calling order		
No way	101	11%
Partly	184	21%
Ok	201	23%
Guess so	72	8%
Absolutely	335	38%
Total	893	100%
6. Should vehicles identify what type they are? (eg: pickup, lowbed, tanker, etc)		
Never	16	2%
Always	664	75%
Only wide loads	210	24%
Total	890	100%
7. When is the best / most sensible time to implement new radio calling rules?		
After breakup in the interior and at the start of the new season on the coast.	568	65%
As soon as possible and all at once around the province.	301	35%
Total	869	100%
8. What is the best way to inform road users about the radio calling standard? (Indicate as many as you like)		
Fax	135	15%
Email	265	30%
Newsletters	226	25%
Commercial radio	151	17%
Through the mills/Ministry of Forests	312	35%
Presentations to explain it all	142	16%
Road user groups	196	22%
Posted at the scales	256	29%
All of the above	542	61%

- Calling kilometers every 2kms on a busy radio when you are on a section of road away from the busy section of road does not help. When you know the you are in an area that has much less traffic than where the congestion is you should call every 5kms.
- The best system I've participated in to identify logging trucks vs pickups is for pickups to call up and down and logging trucks to call loaded and empty. It is simple and requires the least amount of talking on the valuable airwaves. You need more time and room to clear a loaded logging truck than a pickup and in some cases do not require pulling over, just slowing down to pass a pickup which helps reduce congestion.
- Lowbeds should identify when they are travelling up loaded so they can be cleared appropriately.

The above is just a sampling of the emailed and faxed comments we got – more than 200 came in! This is obviously a hot topic, and any changes made will effect all road users, not just the forest industry. The official standards and protocols being proposed by the Provincial Radio Communications Working Group have not yet been finalized, so we'll be waiting to hear what they are. But whatever comes down, the provincial standardization of resource road radio frequencies, signage and calling procedures will be the single most visible operational change on resource roads to occur in decades, and will substantially change how all road users communicate. The harmonized approach from the various ministries involved to include frequencies, signage and calling procedures in one bundle makes sense in terms of implementation and cost effectiveness. We are glad that we were able to provide the opportunity for input from road users, and we know that the changes, if made in a common sense approach, will benefit all of us for years to come.

For up-to-date info on the Working Group's progress, and information about the upcoming changes, go to <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hth/engineering/index.htm>, click on What's New, and then Road Radio Pilot Project ■

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