



Help Stop Crimes in B.C.'s Forests

Timber theft and vandalism in Crown forests costs the province - costs you, the taxpayer - an estimated \$10 million to \$20 million a year. The B.C. government wants you to help cut those losses. And Crime Stoppers is offering rewards.

Timber thieves are especially keen on old-growth western red cedar. The stock of this beautiful wood is declining, so prices are rising. This potential for higher profits leads to more theft of cedar. However, Douglas-fir, yew, spruce, and pine are targets as well.

Sometimes the thieves take timber from sites that have been logged by legitimate contractors but not yet cleared. Frequently, though, they cut timber themselves, often in areas that are supposed to be protected, such as parks and ecological reserves.

In stealing timber, these people are taking public resources - assets that belong to all British Columbians. They're also stealing some of our natural heritage. Further, timber thieves lack the proper equipment and expertise and often cause extensive damage to the local environment, including nearby trees, soil and streams.

What can you do to help cut the losses and minimize the damage done to our forests each year? Lots.

The public is the ministry's eyes and ears in the forests. As such, people can watch for suspicious activities. Is someone cutting timber and loading it into a pickup or a van? Legitimate loggers generally have specialized logging trucks and load them at designated sites. Are rental vans out in the forest where they would not normally be? Do you see nighttime campfires or bright lights where none usually appear? Do you hear chainsaws at night? Have you seen someone damaging logging equipment or a Forest Service campsite or trail?

You can help by reporting such incidents. If you think you have witnessed a crime in the forest, do not approach the person and do not take photos of them. Instead, observe, record and report. What to look for? Description of the person or people, description of their vehicle or vessel, any registration or distinguishing logo such as licence plate number or car rental name, and what the person is doing, when and where.

Then call your information into the local police, the local Forest Service office or Crime Stoppers at:

1-800-222-8477 - (1-800-222-TIPS)

You may remain anonymous if you wish. If you want to be eligible for a reward, call the Crime Stoppers tip line.