



Guideline for Hand Falling Activities

Scope

This guideline applies to all hand falling being undertaken by parties under contract of hire or service to the FLNRO or any other participating agencies and includes hand falling undertaken by agency staff.

Hand falling is one of the highest risk activities undertaken in FLNRO

Purpose

To clarify hand falling supervision and planning requirements that facilitates safe workplace activities when administering contracts and supervising FLNRO activities.

Staff can assist in the eliminating avoidable incidents by understanding the principles within this guideline and supporting best practices in your supervisory and operational control

This guideline will assist staff:

- Who administer contracts that include hand falling directly or through subcontractors,
- When undertaking hand falling activities for FLNRO purposes,
- To ensure appropriate planning is undertaken and workers involved are qualified.



Definitions

Hand falling: The falling of trees by manual means with at least one person (maximum 2) at or near the base of the tree during falling and not inside a protected cab, where the trees are greater than 6 inches (15cm) at stump height 12 inches (30cm).

Faller¹: An individual certified by BC Forest Safety Council, ENFORM or the BC Wildfire Service and has documented qualifications for the activities; slope and timber conditions (refer to faller record of experience and see wallet card examples in Appendix A).

Falling Supervisor²: A falling supervisor is someone available who can plan, coordinate, inspect and document falling activities within their qualifications for activities, slope and timber conditions.

- * A **qualified** falling supervisor must have completed the BC Forest Safety Council (BCFSC) Falling Supervisor Training Course and be knowledgeable of the work being performed.
- or
- * A **Certified** Falling Supervisor (CFS) is an externally validated ticket issued by the BCFSC that ensures the supervisor is operationally competent, able to plan, coordinate, inspect and document faller's performance in the course of daily professional falling duties.

Falling plan: A geographic based process that defines the project intent and safety protocols. In its simplest version it contains an Emergency Response Plan (ERP), map, workplace hazard assessment, worksite access controls, the type and means to access qualified assistance and written objectives to be carried out.

Utility Arborist: means a person who undertakes any work required to prune or clear vegetation in proximity to energized electrical equipment, structures and conductors or who prunes, falls or removes trees which could come into contact with energized power lines.

¹ BCWS, arborists and Enform fallers are not initially trained to undertake forestry falling which includes falling for harvesting and right of way work. Falling by BCWS and Enform trained fallers to support these activities must be supervised in workplace specific training for the work activity by a qualified supervisor with documented experience in the work activity until competence for work activity is met.

² Can be applied to FLNRO contracts entered into or awarded after April 1, 2013 with supporting contract conditions.



Qualified Assistance: processes are expected to be in place for all chainsaw activities to account for Injury, Emergency and Falling Difficulties. Acceptable qualified assistance is determined by the falling supervisor, which generally includes other fallers however machines with radio contact that can access the falling site within 10 minutes surface travel are acceptable. It includes in the event of:

a) Injury/Emergency

Person(s) trained, equipped and able to promptly render first aid where attendant can reach injured workers within 10 minutes including free fallers that may become trapped under logs.

- (1) Person(s) equipped and capable to assist in managing a situation that requires immediate response required to prevent or control a hazard by assessing and mitigating danger,
- (2) Be able to slash or clear a path for evacuation, if required.

b) Falling Difficulty

- (1) A difficult situation for a faller is one where advice or assistance is needed before work can proceed but the situation is not urgent,
- (2) Assisting faller must be certified and qualified to manage hazards associated with site conditions including the alternate means of falling required to resolve the difficulty being appropriate to the situation.

Emergency: Imminent danger to people, property or the environment.

Available: A person or equipment that can be accessed or supplied to the worksite within the course of a normal working day, by means of a pre-established communications plan.

Readily Available: A person with/or equipment that can be accessed from the workers known location within 10 minutes surface travel time.



Supervision Considerations

Hand falling must only be undertaken by parties, as defined in this guideline. Fallers must give evidence of proficiency for the activity, timber and slope they are working in via certification cards and/or faller log books.

All falling operations will occur under the supervision of a Falling Supervisor. The falling supervisor (frequently a contractor) must be designated for the project to approve the falling plan and continually address the complexity and challenges of the falling activities as they develop until replaced by a suitable party or completion of the project.

The level of engagement determined by the falling supervisor must be appropriate to the risk associated with the project. The falling supervisor is to ensure appropriate risk mitigation strategies are used, accessible and monitored for effectiveness.

In the case of BCWS activities, qualified supervisors are initially general supervisors trained in basic supervision of falling activities and tasked with the overall command of the incident. When complexity and challenges of falling operations exceed the capacity to effectively address the multiple hazards and conditions of an incident in the field, certified Falling Coordinators/Supervisors should be used to address the faller specific challenges of wildfires.

Adequate level of supervision: Operations involving high risk and extended duration, usually involving multiple fallers, generally require full time engagement by the falling supervisor(s) to monitor falling activities and adjust plans as necessary. Generally supervisors required for this performance level should meet the Certified Falling Supervisor criteria.

For emergency situations where supervisors are not available fallers may be used to address Falling Supervisor role in the development of a falling plan.

Where small projects require the services of only one faller: the faller should also meet the requirements of a falling supervisor for having a falling plan and have provisions for summoning Qualified Assistance with effective means for Injury and Emergency.

A falling plan must be developed with full engagement of the falling supervisor in collaboration with hand faller(s) and others rendering qualified assistance. It is the falling supervisor (frequently a contractor) that will deem the plan to be adequate for the circumstance.

Falling plans will vary in nature and content with the falling and project circumstance but all projects must address the minimum elements specified in this guideline. All fallers engaged in the project must be aware of and undertake their activity consistent with the supervisors plan and have a means to communicate necessary alterations for safety.



Planning Considerations

All hand falling will occur in accordance with a plan that addresses at minimum:

- **Designating a falling supervisor or qualified supervisor.**
- **Hazard assessment** methods must be specific to the project and be communicated to workers at the Initial Safety Meeting for the worksite,
- **Emergency Response Plan (ERP) considerations** and planning must ensure the ability to react to unforeseen health and safety risks of all workers under anticipated working conditions,
 - ERP must consider at a minimum: Location of worksite, directions and access to worksite, communications by radio or phone, contact information for assistance, alternate methods of egress, to transfer injured workers to medical aid or for other emergencies, first aid requirements,
- **Safety check (sign in/out) procedures** for the crew and individual hand fallers with a partner monitoring system,
- **Posted Signage and Safe Work Procedures** for the work being undertaken must be present onsite for the safety of all workers involved in the hand falling operations. (example: road closure procedures for activity near roads, aircraft operations procedures or blasting procedures),
- **Qualified assistance** must be readily available and able to control hazards and assist with an emergency, injury or falling difficulty,
- **Alternative methods** including avoidance, equipment or blasting must be known and accessible to the faller for use in the project. How to access alternate methods is the responsibility of the falling supervisor.
- **Utility and Infrastructure** require specialized qualifications from Utility Arborists to manage timber hazards within striking distance from community structures and infrastructure.
- **Resolving Unsafe Conditions and Plan Changes** require clear conversations with the supervisor about the nature of the hazards or conflicts with the established plan and proposed alternate strategies for safe completion of work. It is crucial that workers and contractors have the opportunity to resolve unsafe conditions collaboratively and without discrimination.



Summary

FLNRO contract administrators, project leads and supervisors must ensure projects involving hand falling:

- Have adequate falling plans in place,
- Involve and engage qualified falling supervision,
- Are undertaken by fallers qualified for the work, and
- Ensure that fallers have planning flexibility to remove trees safely.

In addition FLNRO contract administrators and or project leads will ensure, that Prime Contractors are aware their responsibility to ensure the falling plan remains supported throughout all falling activities.

Site supervisors, Prime Contractors, and contract administrators must be aware of the falling plan to ensure it remains supported at all times.

“If a safe plan cannot be developed and implemented, the work must be curtailed and contract work suspended until the circumstances are addressed.”

A safe falling plan is the start to safe work!

This guideline can be shared with contractors for informational purposes and may form the basis for contractual obligations.

For more information see

<http://www2.worksafebc.com/Portals/Forestry/FallingAndBucking.asp?reportid=31674>

<http://www2.worksafebc.com/publications/OHSRegulation/Part26.asp#SectionNumber:26.20.1>

See Appendix A for example certification and qualification documents.



Appendix A

Falling tickets examples as proof of competence to the BC Faller Training standard



- ✓ All of the above faller tickets verify that the named individual has met the minimum requirements set out in the BC faller training standard specified by WorkSafeBC.
- ✓ Each program has a unique curriculum, expiry/maintenance, competency verification and training on hazards specific to that industry in compliance with the BC faller training standard.
- ✓ Employers are responsible for verifying the competency of any faller they employ regardless of which certifying body has issued their certification.