

Some B.C. loggers get extra day off to catch up on sleep, improve alertness

'You go back 10, 20 years, the safety record in the forestry industry wasn't very good'



Logging company owner Dan Todd says he's noticed driver reaction times are slower when they've been working long overnight shifts. (Tyson Koschik/CBC)

Some B.C. logging truck drivers are being given extra time off to catch up on sleep in order to help improve their overall health and alertness while on the road.

Brad Bennett, Woodlands manager for Interfor at the Adams Lake sawmill, says logging truck drivers often work from 10 p.m. to 10 a.m during this time of year.

"Studies have shown that people who go on to those early shifts ... for five days and then go on to their normal life on the weekend can only do that for a period of time. After that, their sleep deprivation goes to a level that's really

impairing them," said Bennett.

Dan Todd, co-owner of Bill Todd Logging who is contracted to haul the logs for the mill, also noticed changes in his drivers after these shifts.

"The longer the guys are on the night shift hauling, you can see little things pop up where incidents start to happen that normally wouldn't on a normal day shift haul," said Todd. Those things, Todd says, include forgetting caps on fuel tanks and slower reaction times.

"We do know repetitive days on night duty specifically and lack of sleep increases fatigue," said Trish Kohorst, a transportation safety program manager with the B.C. Forest Safety Council.

"The day off that Interfor is doing would certainly allow drivers, if they use that time properly, to catch up on sleep." Kohorst said.

- [**Woman killed after logging truck rolls over near Agassiz**](#)

Kohorst says she isn't aware of any other mills or licensees in B.C. doing this, but she knows others are working to combat fatigue.

"Taking any safety initiative is positive for our industry."

"The reality is, you go back 10, 20 years, the safety record in the forestry industry wasn't very good, frankly," said Adams Lake sawmill's Bennet.

Bennett says the extra time off means it may take a couple of extra days to meet the log quotas, but overall, it doesn't affect operations at the mill.

"This is just one of many areas that we're looking at to try and improve and get rid of that persona of a dangerous industry."

*With files from Shelley Joyce and [**Daybreak Kamloops**](#)*