



Local man receives award from BC Forest Safety Council

Nanaimo, B.C. – The co-founder of Duncan-based Alternative Forest Operations Ltd. (AFO) has received an award from the BC Forest Safety Council, in recognition of a long career in the forest industry that has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to improving safety awareness, expanding safety knowledge, developing safety skills at ground level and building a lasting culture of safety among BC's forest workers.

Sig Kemmler was presented the Cary White Memorial Award for Lifetime Achievement at the Vancouver Island Safety Conference, October 1st in Nanaimo. The award, co-presented by the Honourable Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, Donna Wilson, vice-president of Industry Services and Sustainability, WorkSafeBC and Safety Council CEO Peter Lineen, was created in honor of one of the Council's first Forest Safety Advocates who passed away in 2008. With more than 30 years experience in the industry – including 23 years with WorkSafeBC, Cary White was an individual often described as someone who had forestry and the safety of workers in his blood. The selection criteria for the Cary White Memorial Award for Lifetime Achievement include:

- A long career in forestry safety
- Proven commitment to safety culture
- Established trainer / mentor / communicator

“Sig Kemmler has shown true leadership in safety through the development and initiation of safety policies, standards and practices throughout his company, Alternative Forest Operations,” said Ally Gibson RFT, Post-Harvesting Operations Coordinator at Island Timberlands. “These procedures are forefront in his everyday operations and to anyone visiting the work site. His dedication to sending people home safely is not only a personal commitment but has also become a commitment extending to his project managers and all their employees,” Gibson added. “This dedication starts with the training of new employees, daily tail gate meetings, formal sit down safety meetings and through to incident and close call investigations. As a result Sig has proven to be a true leader in safety in the forest industry.”

Mr. Kemmler was a young man in 1960 when his family emigrated from Germany. By 1965 he had found a permanent home in British Columbia. Kemmler obtained a diploma in Forest Technology from Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo, which was known then as Malaspina College. Shortly after, he began a career as a tree faller and was first exposed to helicopter logging in 1982.

Kemmler was strongly influenced to become an advocate for workplace safety in 1996, when the company he was employed with experienced a workplace fatality.



In 2005, he co-founded Alternative Forest Operations (AFO), a dynamic group of people providing both conventional and highly specialized services to the Forest, Energy and Park sectors in British Columbia. Safety, quality, innovation and profitability are the foundation of their business. They are Safe Certified as a safe company by the BC Forest Safety Council (BCFSC). Kemmler personally has 32 years of experience in various roles; a coastal faller, helicopter logging manager, forest fire fighter, single stem logging, cable and ground-based logging, and as a business owner.

AFO conducts full phase logging with particular emphasis on sensitive sites such as in water sheds. The company has cut over 1.2 million cubic meters of timber for both conventional and helicopter yarding applications. AFO is also well-known for single stem harvesting, a unique form of helicopter logging where quality is considered more than quantity. This specialized service requires the agility to climb trees with a chain saw and climbing gear and in some cases swing from tree to tree without touching the ground. Since 2005 AFO has completed more than 100,000 cubic metres of single stem harvesting.

The BC Forest Safety Council is a not-for-profit society dedicated to promoting forest health and safety. It was founded and is supported by all major forestry organizations in British Columbia and works with forestry employers, workers, contractors and the provincial government and agencies to implement changes necessary to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries in the forest sector.

For more information:

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ATTACHED PHOTO:

Donna Wilson, vice-president of Industry Services and Sustainability, WorkSafeBC (left), Hon. Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (second from right), and Council CEO Peter Lineen (far right) present the 2011 Cary White award to Sig Kemmler (second from left) of Alternative Forest Operations Ltd. at the Oct. 1 Vancouver Island Safety Conference in Nanaimo.