

## **Testimonial about the Forest Industry's Occupational Health & Safety Training: An eye opener!**

**By Mark Churchill, RFT**

Prior to attending the Small Employer OHS Training Course, I was probably like most people and thought that I knew what was required to provide a safe work site and what safety concerns to discuss when hiring a contractor to conduct some silviculture work, logging or road building.

Working part-time as a forest consultant in a two-man operation and as a woodlot licensee who hired contractors to conduct the harvesting and road construction phases, I had heard of the SAFE Certified designation but had thought it was only for the larger companies. That changed recently when in my area of the province, the local mills have moved to only hiring SAFE Certified contractors and if I wanted to continue to sell logs and provide consulting services to these sawmills and the loggers who were working for these mills I too would have to obtain the SAFE Certified designation.

One of the first steps in obtaining SAFE Certification is to have someone in your company attend the two-day Small Employer OHS Training Course. For a woodlot licensee that means you. You can't hire a contractor to provide that service.

I attended the course in December 2014 expecting not to learn much; after all I have been working in the forest sector for 35 years. By the end of the first day I realized how little I really knew, and that I had taken too much for granted over the years in the area of safety responsibility. The instructor, John Gooding, guided the class made up of forest consultants, trucking companies and logging contractors.

The goal of the course was to prepare you to set up and run an effective proactive safety program at your company and prepare you for the certification/audit process. By the end of day two it had achieved that goal and much more. Detailed and current safe work procedures for all phases of our operation are available as is advice on how to effectively implement a safety plan that consists of both the prerequisite paper content and more importantly the implementation of a safety attitude that will evolve into both a safer and a more productive worksite.

If you haven't taken the course yet, go to the Forest Safety Council website to sign up for one near you.

*Mark worked 11 years with the Ministry of Forests and for the past 24 years as a Forestry Consultant. He has been a Woodlot Licensee for 15 years.*