

Fast Facts: Career of the Month (April 2017)

Chain saw and skidder operators (NOC 8421)

Statistics from www.workbc.ca, Career Cruising, Service Canada and BC Labour Market Report



Chain saw and skidder operators operate chain saws to fell, delimb and buck trees, and operate skidders to move or yard the felled trees from the logging site to the landing area for processing and transportation

People in this occupation:

- generally work for logging companies and contractors, although some of are also self-employed
- should be physically fit and enjoy working outdoors and in remote settings
- should have a basic mechanical ability since they often work with and maintain machinery
- should be comfortable working in a team setting
- should also have knowledge of safety procedures due to hazardous working conditions
- **Duties**
- Chainsaw and skidder operators work together to prepare sites for logging and harvesting.
- Chain saw and skidder operators perform some or all of the following duties:
- Operate chain saw to fell, delimb and buck trees at the logging site and loading area
- Operate cable, or grapple skidder to move or yard the felled trees from the logging site to the landing area for processing and transportation
- Assess site, terrain and weather conditions before felling and yarding trees
- May work as member of a team rotating between chain saw operation and skidder operation
- May maintain and perform minor repairs on skidders, chain saws and other equipment.

Common Job Titles:

- chaser - logging
- cutter, logs / poles / posts
- feller - logging
- landing buckler / faller and buckler
- logger / lumberjack / horse logger
- operator, cable skidder / grapple skidder
- operator, chain saw / logging tractor
- pieceworker - logging
- worker, forest logging

Work Environment

- Rotating shift work is common in this occupational group. Operators typically work 40–50 hours per week. Shifts range from 8–12 hours, depending on the worker's position and the work location. Long shifts and overtime are more common in logging camps. Long shifts are also more common in northern B.C. due to the shorter operating season.
- Chain saw operators and skidder operators work outdoors in various weather conditions. Working conditions include noisy machinery, unstable ground and steep hill slopes. As well, workers are expected to work independently or at a distance from co-workers at times.
- Working conditions have improved for skidder operators in recent years as most machinery cabs are now equipped with heaters and air conditioning.
- Job sites are often located in remote areas. As a result, workers may have to travel and remain on site for extended periods of time.
- These are very dangerous occupations and there are risks associated with being near falling trees. All work sites follow strict safety regulations due to the hazardous nature of the work.

Earnings

- \$22-\$38/hour
- Median: \$28/hour or \$58,418/year

Workforce Characteristics:

- In BC 1,600 workers are employed in this sector
- 46% work mostly full-time
- 96% are male, 4% are female
- 8% are 15-24 years
- 38% are 25-44 years
- 49% are 45-64 years
- 4% are 65 +

Skills

- Manual Dexterity
- Spatial Perception
- Object-Oriented
- Motor Coordination

Education, training and qualifications

Workers in these occupations may be required to have completed secondary school. Workers must be both physically and mentally fit as they work in a fast moving, hazardous, physically demanding environment. Training and requirements in B.C. may include:

- completion of the provincial Faller Certification program through the BC Forest Safety Council
 - an understanding of tree harvesting regulations and the ability to identify tree species, read maps and maintain equipment
 - previous experience as a logging and forestry labourer or logging machine operator, which is beneficial but not required
 - heavy equipment operation certification, air brake certification, first aid certification and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System certification
 - college courses in forestry
- Formal on-the-job training is provided and usually lasts 3–16 months, depending on the type of machinery used and the trainee's progress. Workers already licensed or certified in another province or territory in a provincially regulated occupation will have their credentials recognized in B.C. For more detailed information, contact the provincial regulator. A list of provincial regulators can be found at www.tilma.ca/pdf/BCRegulatoryAuthorities.pdf

Career Paths

Chainsaw operators and skidders may work within either job with relative ease. Many skills are transferable, and these workers can move into other logging-related jobs, such as logging machinery operators. With additional education and training, workers may get wood processing or sawmill machine operating positions. Progression to supervisory positions, such as bullbucker, is possible with experience. In the past some experienced personnel have started operating their own contracting companies.

