



Keeping seasonal workers and youthful campers and day trippers safe in Fort Langley

www.fortcamping.com

Brae Island Regional Park on the banks of the Fraser River in Fort Langley is home to **Fort Camping**, a 20-year-old campground, on land that was purchased 10 years ago by Metro Vancouver, Regional Parks. The camp, that offers a dizzying array of activities, employs four permanent staff with that number ballooning to 25 seasonal staff in the peak operating months of June, July and August.

Stan Duckworth manages the camp (with three other permanent staff) on behalf of Metro Vancouver's Regional Parks.

The idyllic location of this business accommodates year round camping (up to four months max) of: motor homes, trailers, fifth wheels, truck campers, van campers, tent trailers and tents at 156 camping sites.

There's also a large group campsite with three tent cabins that each sleep 10 people, a group cooking shelter/picnic area and a group campfire pit available for groups of 30 people or more.

"We hire a lot of seasonal employees," said Duckworth, "and they come from both ends of the working spectrum – those entering the workforce and those who have retired from the work force but have decided to take on a part-time or seasonal position." He uses this range of experience to the advantage of safety and training by pairing more mature or "seasoned" workers with those just starting out and who are typically in their late teens and early 20s.

The hardest part about the seasonal nature of the operation is being able to ensure that staff is adequately trained at the same time the season is at its busiest, he says. This is especially true given the array of duties and positions required to keep the camp operating and entertaining guests, young and old. Positions include: registration attendants, groundskeepers, gardeners, evening hosts, security, store clerks, café cooks, children's activity leaders, boat and bike rental attendants, canoe & kayak instructors, cleaners and maintenance workers.

Depending on the type of work involved, there's a whole host of safety certifications: Food Safe, First Aid, CPR, Lifeguarding, appropriate certifications in kayaking and canoeing instruction as well as the safe handling of propane, and WHMIS.

In addition to the training for each position, they offer group training related to more "soft skills" such as how to handle child discipline issues while working with children and youth ranging in age from five years old to 18 with the majority in the five to 12 year old range.



“Our biggest issue is having the time to train staff in an appropriate manner within a two to four month seasonal job,” he said. “It requires making the commitment to do the training in June, July and August using the expertise of seasonal supervisors and returning employees”

“We often have to slow them down and get them to really think about what they’re doing in a safe manner,” said Duckworth of the younger workers.

We conduct a formal orientation of all the Occupational Health and Safety regulations related to their specific jobs, said Duckworth at the beginning of the season.

The park also has a day use area that offers paddle boats and bicycle rentals as well as canoe and kayak lessons, which are open to both campers and the general public.