Police have confirmed a third person has died from a deadly train derailment in Woss Thursday.

Cpl. Tammy Douglas of the Island District RCMP confirmed to Black Press Friday morning one of the three people who were airlifted to hospital died and RCMP are on their way to the small village, located about 75km southeast of Port McNeill.

Around 8:45 a.m. Thursday morning, a train carrying logs and Western Forest Products personnel derailed near the centre of Woss.

At the time, two people were confirmed dead and three people were transported to hospital.

WFP spokesperson Amy Spencer could not confirm the number of personnel involved.

Dave Rushton, a retired logger who represents the village on the Regional District of Mount Waddington’s board of directors told Black Press an unknown number of cars loaded with logs left the track after breaking free from cable and running away downhill.

He explained a ‘speeder’ rail car carrying three crew was struck and the occupants were pinned inside.

First responders were Western Forest Product crews, who used machines and saws to try to clear logs and get to trapped workers, he said.

“There’s been quite a call-out,” he noted. “We had Port McNeill (fire rescue), the regional district, and Orca Sand and Gravel send their guys.”

The Orca mine is just north of Port McNeill and has its own trained rescue crew.
“A load of logs dropped right over the speeder,” said Rushton, who added another worker nearby was also struck by a log. “The crews were in there trying to buck ‘em out. Somehow, the cars got away. There’s a derail ramp that’s meant for this, and that’s happened a number of times over the years where the cars are sent up the derail. I’ve seen ‘em hit the derail and tip over, but something like this hasn’t happened in my 50 years here.”

The last person was pulled from the wreckage around 2:30 p.m. and airlifted to hospital. When the last of the injured was rescued, six colleagues followed the ground ambulance to the air ambulance helicopter, which had been waiting all day at the landing pad set up at the WFP site, and helped move the worker into the helicopter.

The workers stood in silence, and watched as the helicopter left for hospital. Ambulances who attended the scene had to drive in from various North Island locations.

Don Demens, president and chief executive officer of WFP said in a statement Thursday, “the company is saddened about the tragic incident on the rail line.”

“At this time, we express our deepest concern and condolences to the families, friends, and co-workers of those whose lives were lost (Thursday) morning and who are injured. Our hearts and minds are with them. The safety and security of our staff and the communities where we work are paramount. We are co-operating fully with all authorities and will continue to do so.”

Demens thanked the numerous rescue personnel who stepped up to assist, and added WFP will provide updates as information becomes available.

Reports indicate he, along with other company representatives, are en-route to the village Friday.

The Village of Woss - located in the Nimpkish Valley - is a tight-knit community with around 200 residents. The Englewood Railway runs through the village.

Police said the cause of the derailment remains under investigation.

-With files from John Harding, Jocelyn Doll and J.R Rardon.