

FORESTRY BULLETIN

Fatal Accidents in Logging, Forestry and Tree Work for the Year Ending 30 June 1996

Twelve people lost their lives in forestry and related work during the year ending 30 June 1996. Felling trees was the main cause of fatalities due to poor work methods and lack of concern for safety when working around hung-up or cut-up trees. There are well documented minimum standards that have been established and adopted by those people working in forestry and related work. Unfortunately, in a number of the fatalities listed below, these minimum standards have not been adhered to.

Here's what happened:

Logging:

- A hung-up tree was being winched out of the tree holding it. The tree being winched suddenly flicked out from behind the standing tree causing the top to break out and fall at a right angle to the expected direction of fall. The worker was struck by the broken top.
- A worker was attempting to bring a hung-up tree to the ground by felling another tree onto it. The falling tree slid backwards off the hung-up tree and struck the faller in the pelvis and trunk.
- When carrying out repairs to the hydraulics, the fork arms of a rubber tyred loader descended trapping the victim to the front of the loader.
- In a helicopter logging operation, a worker was assisting to cut a rimu tree to log lengths when the log slid downhill and rolled twice on the victim.
- A worker assisting in a felling operation was struck by a dislodged dead spar when a cut-up tree fell back into standing trees.

- After a tree was felled, the butt flicked up and came across and caught the faller as he was retreating along his escape route.
- A hauler driver, who was alone at the time, attempted to replace an over wound strawline which had come off the drum. The hauler motor was still running and the operator's jersey became caught in the drum drive shaft. He was pulled across the revolving drive shaft and around twice.
- In a woodlot logging operation, the truck driver was loading his own logs. He drove the loader towards another skid but the loader went off the road and the driver was thrown out and crushed.

Commercial firewood:

- Large, heavily-branched trees were being felled for firewood and any logs that could be obtained. As a result of poor felling techniques, the tree was cut completely off the stump and slid forward off the stump before falling backwards and hitting the faller as he tried to escape.

Firewood gathering:

- While felling for firewood the faller lost control of the large tree. He attempted to run away but was crushed as he ran into the path of the falling tree.
- A tree being felled for firewood hung-up in another tree. He attempted to pull the standing tree down with a tractor, the tree split and a piece of it struck the faller.
- A tree had been felled for firewood and was held off the ground by large limbs. The farmer started to remove the limbs and the tree rolled and fell on him.

Notification of Hazardous Forestry Work

There has been some concern and confusion about the notification of hazardous forestry work. Let's look at the legislation and then the practical interpretation of the notification requirements.

Legislation

The Health and Safety in Employment Regulations 1995 require that hazardous work is notified. Notifiable work for forestry is interpreted under the Regulations as:

2. Interpretation:

...

"Notifiable work" means—

...

- (b) Any logging operation or tree-felling operation, being an operation that is undertaken for commercial purposes:"

Lets now look at what "logging" and "tree-felling" are interpreted as.

"Logging"—

- (a) Means felling trees by manual or mechanical means for the purpose of extracting logs, poles, and posts; and
- (b) Includes extracting logs to an area within a forest for processing and loading out:

...

"Tree-felling" means felling of trees by manual or mechanical means for any purpose—

- (a) Other than extracting logs, poles, and posts; but
- (b) Including the purposes of—
 - (i) Harvesting firewood commercially;
 - (ii) Land clearance;
 - (iii) Maintaining shelter belts for horticulture;
 - (iv) Maintaining or removing trees in the vicinity of overhead power lines;
 - (v) Managing and caring for trees in the general community;

(vi) Silviculture;

(vii) Willow layering and any other work in catchment or soil erosion operations:

The work to be performed is to be notified in writing to the nearest office of the Occupational and Health Service of the Department of Labour at least 24 hours before the work commences. The following information should be provided in the notification:

1. The nature and location of the work;
2. The name, address, and contact details of the employer;
3. The type of notifiable work;
4. The intended date of the commencement of the work; and
5. The estimated duration of the work.

Interpretation of the Notification Requirements

Obviously, it would be impracticable to require crews to notify in writing at each move from skid to skid, compartment to compartment, or location to location, within a forest or urban or rural district.

In general, in respect to tree felling and logging operations, notification will be necessary when operations move out of the original notified forest or woodlot or original urban or rural district in the case of arboriculture or maintenance of trees around power lines.

If any work is likely to attract public attention by such things as closing or partial closing of public roads or footpaths or felling or logging trees in areas with high vehicular or foot traffic, contact should be made with the inspector so that he is aware of the situation.

Work of an ongoing nature can be covered by a bulk notification providing the work is of a similar nature over a number of sites. This would cover work such as planned maintenance of rural power lines. Some OSH branches already have systems in place to cover such situations.

Jonsered and Husqvarna Safety Helmets

Husqvarna has informed OSH that a consultant has compared the above helmets—which comply with European Standard Industrial Safety Helmets EN 397—to the NZS 5806: 1980. Both helmets carry EC-type examination certificates issued by the Swedish National

Testing and Research Institute which confirm that helmets comply with EN 397.

The consultant confirms that the helmets should be made available to the New Zealand forestry market without the need for further testing.