

Forestry Health & Safety

It is the responsibility of every owner to make their forest a safe and healthy place to work.



The Health and Safety and Welfare at work Act 2005

The Health and Safety and Welfare at work Act 2005 is a legal requirement.

When planning and carrying out forestry operations, the law requires that a number of health and safety duties must be completed. A Safety Statement is a written document aimed at minimising exposure to risk or injury or ill-health for all people working in the forest. If the landowner is undertaking the work or is directing the work then he / she needs to prepare a Safety Statement. If the work is undertaken by a Forestry Works Manager then he /she prepares the Safety Statement and sets out in writing the health and safety measures taken to protect workers. In turn all workers must abide by these measures. The Safety Statement should:

- Include a written risk assessment
- Point to safe working procedures
- Establish that operators are competent and qualified for their tasks
- Have the necessary tools/ machinery for the task
- Provide procedures to supervise and monitor the work
- Emphasise the need for suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Protect public health and safety



The Code of Practice for Managing Safety and Health in Forestry Operations

The Code of Practice for Managing Safety and Health in Forestry Operations published by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) sets out the legal duties on Landowners, Forestry Works Managers and Contractors.

Role	Definition	Examples of who may take on this role
Landowner	The person or company in control of the land on which the forestry work takes place	The person in control of the land on which the forestry work takes place. Timber growers such as farmers or estate owners with forested land, Coillte, other public bodies and local authorities.
Forestry Works Manager	The person or company who commissions work on a forest site	Anyone in the landowner role directly engaging forestry contractors as part of their business. Timber purchasers such as traders, processors and contractors
Contractor	The provider of a forestry service	Contracting companies with their own employees or who take on sub-contractors e.g. hauliers
Subcontractor	Anyone engaged by a contractor other than by direct employment	Anyone working under contract to a contractor. Anyone in any of the other roles above who works on the site



Know your role

If the land owner is carrying out the work themselves then all of the requirements of the Health and Safety and Welfare at work Act 2005 rest with them.

When the landowner is obtaining the services of a harvesting contractor or other, then they should enter into a written arrangement outlining what responsibility each party has in relation to the operations taking place.

Depending on your control of operations, you may be responsible for a number of roles, e.g. Landowner and / or Forestry Works Manager.

As the Landowner you are required to consider the following:

- Site access for machinery
- The effects of forestry operations on your neighbours, the local community and the public
- Inform the forestry work manager/contractor of all known hazards on their land to complete the risk assessment

Your main duties as a Forestry Works Manager will include:

- Completing a risk assessment for the work on site
- Mapping the work site, highlighting hazards e.g. access roads, overheads power lines, steep terrain, windblow, dead or diseased trees
- Ensuring all contractors are competent and properly trained including the necessary health, safety training and insurance details
- Check weekly to see that the site operational risk assessment is being fully complied with



When engaging a forestry company, forester, sawmill, contractor or any other such client to carry out work on your site. They should then take on the role of Forestry Works Manager and must carry out the duties as described above. It is important prior to any work commencing to get a written agreement on who will be the Forestry Works Manager.

Any Contractors / Subcontractors operating on site must:

- Be competent and properly trained
- Have a good safety record
- Be in possession of a specific site Safety Statement based on risk assessment
- Coordinate with employees / subcontractors to ensure that the Health and Safety requirements are in place



Health and Safety check list for forestry operations

Prior to the commencement of any operation the Owner, Forest Works Manager, Contractor, Timber Purchaser, etc. should meet to discuss the Health and Safety issues.

The Owner, Forest Works Manager should provide the following documentation:

- Site specific risk assessment, Hazard map with emergency contact details
- Emergency and contingency planning (e.g. GPS coordinates of the site, local doctor and emergency services, location of nearest defibrillator etc.)
- Monitor record



The Contractor should provide the copies of the following documentation:

- Insurance details, both public and employers liability
- Competency certs and first aid certs
- Equipment maintenance records
- Safety statement
- Operational risk assessment
- Lone working policy and procedures if applicable

They should also ensure that the appropriate equipment and signage are on site:

- First aid kit and list of first aid trained personnel
- Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the job
- Site notices relevant to the operation
- Hazard signs

It is important to remember that you as a forest owner have a responsibility to look after yourself and others in your forest

Further Reading

www.teagasc.ie/forestry/H&S

Available at www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/Agriculture_and_Forestry/

- Code of Practice of Managing Safety and Health in Forestry Operations
- Information on Health and Safety Responsibilities of Forest Landowners who intend to fell their trees
- Guide to Safe Working with Timber and Chainsaws
- Chainsaw Safety Training Advice Information Sheet

IFSG Leaflets

- 301 – Using Petrol Driven Chainsaws
- 302 – Basic Chainsaw Felling and Manual Takedown
- 304 – Chainsaw Cross Cutting and Manual Stacking
- 306 – Chainsaw Clearance of Windblow
- 307 – Chainsaw Felling of Large Trees
- 503 – Extraction by Forwarder
- 603 – Mechanical Harvesting
- 804 – Electricity at Work: Forestry
- Code of Practice for preventing injury and occupational ill health in Agriculture and Risk Assessment Document

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