



Information on the Health and Safety responsibilities of Forest Land Owners and Managers who intend to fell their trees

Information Sheet

June, 2014

Over the 5 year period 2009 to 2013 a total of 9 persons have suffered a fatal accident arising from the use of chainsaws or tree felling work activities.

The Teagasc National Farm Survey indicates that about 6.5% of all injuries, in the Agriculture & Forestry sector, are chainsaw or wood related indicating that approximately 120 serious injuries occur each year.

If you intend to apply for or have already received a felling licence, you must be aware of your Health and Safety responsibilities in regard to felling trees. The extent of these responsibilities depends on the contractual arrangements you may enter into for tree felling. *The Code of Practice for Managing Safety and Health in Forestry Operations* published by the Health and Safety Authority sets out the legal duties on Landowners, Forestry Works Managers and Contractors.

The law requires that, during the planning and carrying out of forestry operations, a number of safety and health duties be fulfilled, including:

- Preparing written risk assessments
- Setting out safe working procedures
- Ensuring operators are competent
- Selecting suitable equipment for the job
- Supervising and monitoring the work
- Protecting public safety and health

Forestry Management Companies

Where the Landowner engages the services of a Forestry Management Company to commission and manage the contractors involved in tree felling or harvesting operations then the Forestry Management Company will have the duties of the Forestry Works Manager.

If the Forestry Management Company is engaged in an advisory capacity only then the Forestry Management Company should bring the Health and Safety requirements set out in the Code of Practice to the attention of the Landowner.





If you as the landowner/farmer are intending to put out the work of tree felling and haulage of logs to contractors and where the sale of the logs to a sawmill or other client will be handled by yourself, then you have duties of both the Landowner and Forestry Works Manager.

Landowner duties after directly engaging forestry worksite contractors

Your Main duties as Landowner

- Consider how machines and trucks will access the worksite.
- Consider how forestry operations will affect members of the public, neighbours and local communities.
- Gather information on the hazards in or around the forestry worksite (overhead power lines, steep terrain, sections of trees which are windblown or diseased).

Your Main duties as Forestry Works Manager

- Prepare an outline risk assessment in writing for the work on site.
- Prepare a map or drawing of the forest showing the worksite, access roads, overhead power lines, steep terrain, sections of trees which are wind blown or diseased.
- Ensure that all contractors are competent, have the necessary health and safety training (get copies of training certificates for operators of harvesters, forwarders, chainsaws).
- Monitor and record the health and safety of the operations on the worksite at least once per week.

If you as the landowner/farmer are intending to sell the standing trees to a sawmill, to a harvesting contractor or other client who may take on the work themselves or engage contractors for the felling and haulage, then your responsibilities are limited to that of the Landowner. In this case the role of the Forestry Works Manager then falls to either the sawmill, harvesting contractor or other such client.

Landowner duties – standing sale

- Get written agreement on who will be the Forestry Works Manager.
- Consider how machines and trucks will access the worksite.
- Consider how forestry operations will affect members of the public, neighbours and local communities.
- Gather information on the hazards in or around the forestry worksite (overhead power lines, steep terrain, sections of trees which are windblown or diseased).
- Pass on this information to the Forestry Works Manager.

Further Information

Health and Safety Authority (www.hsa.ie), Email: wcu@hsa.ie, Tel : 1890 289389

Further HSA Guidance

- *The Code of Practice for Managing Safety and Health in Forestry Operations*
- *Are you competent to operate a chainsaw safely?*
- *Guide to Safe Working with Timber and Chainsaws*

