



Guidance on Managing Health and Safety in Forestry

Industry Guidance for Sub-contractors

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1. Introduction

During forestry operations, Contractors, Sub-contractors and other forestry workers are the people most at risk. It is the people working on the ground who would suffer directly because of poor health and safety standards or practice.

You have a responsibility to manage your work and the work of your employees, and to co-ordinate and co-operate with the contractor who has engaged you, as well as the Forest Works Manager (FWM) and others on site. The term manage includes planning, managing, monitoring and co-ordinating work under your control to ensure health and safety standards are achieved.

The effort that you devote to carrying out your duties should be in proportion to the size, complexity and degree of risk of the project as these generally determine the range and nature of the health and safety risks involved.

Thorough planning, risk assessment and supervision are essential elements of all work to help ensure safe and effective operations.

1.1 General introduction

This guide is based on sound industry practice and will particularly help small businesses and organisations to deliver forestry operations in a way to help avoid injury and ill health.

There are five guides – one for each of the main roles that may be involved in forestry operations. These guides seek to help everyone better understand what they and others need to do to work well together, to comply with safety law and to conduct forestry work in a safe and healthy manner.

The five guides are:

- Landowner (including Agent)
- Forestry Works Manager (FWM)
- Contractor
- Sub-contractor
- Worker

1.2 Who is a Sub-contractor?

Anyone engaged by a contractor to work for them on a contract basis rather than by direct employment. A sub-contractor may be an individual, a sole trader, a self-employed worker or a business who carries out, manages or controls forestry work.

You do not have to be engaged directly in the forestry work on site to be a sub-contractor. If the contractor brings you to site to work for them in any capacity but does not employ you directly then you are a sub-contractor. Examples commonly include chainsaw operators, mechanics, tyre and hose fitters, fuel delivery drivers and timber haulage drivers.

1.3 What is the Sub-contractor's role?

Your main duties as a sub-contractor are to manage your employees and to plan and manage the work under your control so that it is carried out in a way that controls the risks to health and safety.

You will have other duties too if more than one contractor or sub-contractor is working on the site. Then you are required to co-operate with the others to plan and co-ordinate your activities with theirs. In particular, you must work closely with the contractor who engaged you and make sure you comply with their instructions as well as any directions and site rules given to you by the Forest Works Manager (FWM) who is in overall control of the worksite.

You are not required to supervise or manage another company's employees, but you must manage your own work and properly direct and supervise anyone working for you. Your responsibilities in this regard apply whether your workers are employees, self-employed or agency workers.

A summary of all the main forestry work roles can be found in **Annex A**.

2. What do you have to do?

2.1 Co-operate and communicate with the others

The aspects of the work that you are responsible for could affect the health and safety of others. To ensure that the risks are properly understood, managed and controlled you must discuss your work plans, methods, timings and your own safety requirements with the contractor, the FWM and all others involved on site. This discussion must take place before starting work and must continue while the work is ongoing. Best practice would be for the FWM to induct you to the site in a pre-commencement meeting.

Where your work involves high-risk elements, for example chainsaw work, the FWM may ask for your expert input to the work plans well before any work starts, so that other work does not unintentionally

compromise your safety. Even if this very early planning input is not possible, you should expect the contractor and the FWM to co-operate with you to make your work safer, and you in turn must co-operate to help others work safely too.

This means that you have a responsibility to establish and maintain good lines of two-way communication with everyone else, and they have the same responsibility to you.

2.2 Manage your personal health and safety

Sub-contractors must not endanger themselves or others by taking dangerous short cuts or working in an unsafe manner.

The FWM and the contractor will produce site safety rules and risk control measures that will apply to anyone working on or visiting site. As a sub-contractor you must:

- obtain a copy of the contractor's site-specific risk assessments and method statements
- understand the risk controls and site rules that are in place, and follow them at all times
- inform the contractor and/or the FWM if any of the risk controls are inadequate. Work with them to develop the risk assessment
- follow the established safe system of work for the site and work to industry best practice as taught in training
- familiarise yourself with site signage boards and the safety documents for emergency procedures
- wear and maintain adequate and appropriate PPE
- maintain machinery in accordance with manufacturer's instruction and any relevant FISA Guides.

2.3 Carry out site-specific risk assessments

All sites and work activities must be covered by a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. A risk assessment describes how health and safety risks will be managed during the work. It must be developed as soon as is practical before starting. It should address early issues such as site- and work-specific hazards, welfare and supporting works such as access materials deliveries, creation of forwarder tracks and ramps, and manual handling of materials etc.

It is the contractor's responsibility, working with the FWM, to provide you with information about the site that is relevant to your work, and to ensure that an appropriate risk assessment has been prepared before works start. Where that information is not provided then you are responsible for requesting it.

The risk assessment for **your** specific work (which will be distinct from the contractor's or FWM's risk assessments) should be developed by you and the contractor together. Generally, you will provide the details and expert knowledge about the work itself and the contractor will make sure the assessment includes the information and safety rules from the FWM. Your risk assessment should be:

- proportionate to the size and nature of the work and the risks involved
- workable and realistic
- sufficiently developed to allow work to start on site
- regularly reviewed and expanded where circumstances change (such as additional operations or changes in site conditions).

2.4 Provide adequate supervision for employees

You must ensure that you arrange adequate supervision for anyone working for you. This will generally be done by you or someone that you have appointed to be supervisor.

Every supervisor ought to be familiar with the type of work they are supervising, and there must be enough supervisors to cover for absences from site. Where works involve high-risk activities (for example, chainsaw operations) there must be an 'appointed person' to control that activity. If the supervisor leaves site for any reason then you must have arrangements in place for someone else to supervise the work and manage the site, and arrangements to ensure everyone else knows that the supervisor has changed.

The level of supervision provided will need to reflect the level of risk associated with the work, and it should take into account the likely behaviour of the workers. You must ensure that operations are managed and supervised so that:

- all work is undertaken as planned, in a safe manner and complies with site rules and agreed control measures
- work complies with relevant legislation and industry guidance
- all accidents, near misses and changes to agreed systems of work are reported.

You will need to have an agreed and functioning lone working procedure if anyone is to be working on site away from other employees and without direct supervision.

2.5 Report unsafe practices, conditions or occurrences

Everyone has a duty to ensure that work is being conducted safely in compliance with the site rules, risk assessment control measures and the instructions of the contractor/FWM. You as a sub-contractor have a responsibility to report to the contractor or FWM if you see problems on site such as:

- unsafe practices or conditions that are placing anyone on site or members of the public at risk
- missing warning signs
- damaged powerline goalposts
- accidents, incidents, near misses or unplanned changes to the agreed system of work.

If unsafe practice, conditions or occurrences arise as a result of an inadequate risk assessment, support the contractor and FWM to develop the risk assessment to reduce or eliminate the risk in future.

3. What information do you need?

As a sub-contractor, you should receive relevant information before you start work on a site and you should receive updated information during the works.

You should expect from the **Contractor**:

- a detailed site operations map or plan
- details of risks and constraints on the work order or timing
- specific risk controls and access arrangements relating to the property
- details of preparation and lead-in time
- appropriate site rules and a suitable site induction
- details of health and safety conditions to be met by you or your workers
- arrangements for reporting unsafe behaviours or conditions
- the procedures to be followed in the event of serious and imminent danger
- details for the use of any shared welfare facilities
- co-operation over planning for the safety of you and your workers
- updated information if any plans, timings or personnel change.

You should expect from your **Workers**:

- compliance with risk controls and site rules

- constructive feedback on site practice including reports of incidents and unsafe practices
- evidence of current training and competence relevant to the risks of the work activity
- the ability to stop work and report anything which might endanger themselves or others.

4. What information must you provide?

You should provide relevant information before your time on the project and updated information during the project.

You should provide **Workers** with:

- access to you to discuss the work and safety matters
- the risk assessments for the work
- the contractor's and/or FWM's site rules
- information about the work, including the nature of the work, the location and duration of the work and any special co-ordination required with others
- access to any site welfare facilities.

You should provide the **Contractor** with:

- your risk assessments (or input to the contractor's risk assessments) for your work activities
- evidence of relevant insurances
- copies of log books/relevant competencies and training
- copies of site records, where requested
- copy of your lone working procedure.

5. What could it look like in practice?

As a sub-contractor you have certain duties and responsibilities to fulfil your role. Each site will be different in detail but in principle, if you consider the following points carefully, they will help you meet those responsibilities.

5.1 Before you start on site

Plan thoroughly for safe working

- Visit the site, check the access arrangements and consider the safest methods to carry out the work
- Find out what hazards there are on the site, and whether they are within the work area or along any access route
- Find out whether other work will take place at the same time as yours and agree how any interfaces with other contractors need to be managed

- Think about how long it will take you to organise your workers and any plant and materials they will need, so you can estimate when you will be ready to start
- Check your proposed workers' skills, knowledge, training and competence, and arrange any retraining or refresher training where necessary
- Consider how, and by whom, the work will be supervised at all stages
- Assess the degree of information, instruction and supervision required, taking into account the nature of the work and the training, experience and likely behaviour of your workers
- Consider how, and by whom, the work will be supervised at all stages
- Check who is providing welfare facilities and agree to share or organise your own as required
- Check what first aid provision will be required, based on the work, the number of workers, known health issues and location
- Clarify emergency arrangements for remote or difficult to access locations
- Explain the method of work that the workers need to follow, particularly if the control measures are unusual or not obvious. Focus on the work activities where there is most risk of injury or ill health
- Share your plans with others so they can take your needs into account when planning and organising their work. One way of doing this is to share your risk assessments and method statement
- Arrange for your workers, plant and materials to arrive on site at the agreed date and time.
- Ensure you and your workers know what to do in the event of an emergency
- Ensure you and your workers are complying with the site rules and deal with issues promptly
- Listen to feedback and consider any suggestions from your workers on better ways of working
- Make sure people are working in accordance with the planned methods and risk assessment controls
- Liaise with the contractor and keep them informed of any changes to your planned working method or timings in case this impacts on other plans
- Liaise with others on site to co-operate over reducing risks to health and safety wherever possible
- Check your tools, plant and equipment and maintain it in good working order in accordance with the manufacturer's instruction and /or FISA guidance. When necessary, maintain, repair or replace it.

5.2 While working on site

Manage the risks to health and safety.

- Set a personal example. Wear your PPE. Challenge unsafe behaviour, practice or conditions wherever you see it – never walk past
- Co-operate with the contractor and FWM to ensure you and your workers receive site induction
- Provide detailed instructions to your workers on what is to be done, who will do it, how it is to be done, the order it is to be done in, and the equipment to be used (or not used). Do not assume everyone will know
- Brief your workers regularly about site safety and what is expected of them

Annex A: Forestry work roles summarised

| Role | Definition | Examples of who may take on this role | Summary of duties and responsibilities |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Landowner | Person or Organisation in control of the land on which forestry work takes place. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estate owners or farmers. • State forest organisations or other public bodies, such as the Crown Estate and local authorities. • Forestry management companies. • Land agents working on behalf of private and public owners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinate the activities of the overall forest environment for health and safety purposes. • Gather information about hazards on and around forestry worksites and communicate these to the FWM. • Ensure that the work on a particular site does not affect the health and safety of other people. • Take advice from a competent specialist or agent on any aspect where they are not sufficiently knowledgeable. |
| Forestry Works Manager (FWM) | Person or Organisation who commissions the work on a forestry site. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone in the Landowner role directly engaging forestry contractors as part of their business. • Anyone engaged by the Landowner to manage and carry out the forestry operation on their behalf. • Forestry management company directly engaging contractors to work on their client's land. • Land agent company directly engaging contractors to work on their client's land. • Timber purchasers (merchants, processors or contractors). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use information from the Landowner to prepare an outline risk assessment for work on the site and for haulage of timber away from site (where applicable). • Select competent contractors who make adequate provision for health and safety. • Specify health and safety measures for contractors working on the site and anyone else who may be affected by the work activity. • Liaise with the Landowner. • Supervise health and safety on site. • Make arrangements for the reporting of incidents, unsafe practices or dangerous occurrences. |
| Contractor | Provider of a forestry service. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracting companies with their own employees or who take on Sub-contractors. • Owner-operators. • Hauliers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the FWM to ensure health and safety standards are met. • Select sub-contractors who are skilled and experienced, competent and have made adequate provision for health and safety. • Manage employees and sub-contractors and ensure they work safely. • Ensure effective supervision is in place so that safe systems of work are maintained if the owner/controller of the contractor's business is absent. • Report any unsafe practices or occurrences. |
| Sub-contractor | Anyone engaged by a contractor other than by direct employment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone working under contract to a contractor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operate with the arrangements for health and safety on the site. • Manage personal health and safety. • Report any unsafe practices or occurrences. • Carry out site-specific risk assessments. • Provide adequate supervision of their employees. |
| Worker | Anyone working in the forestry industry. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone working within the forestry industry or undertaking a related task. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take care of their own health and safety and that of people who may be affected by what they do (or do not do). • Co-operate with others on health and safety, and do not interfere with, or misuse, anything provided for their health, safety or welfare. • Follow the training they have received when using any work items their employer has given them. • Report any injuries, unsafe practices or occurrence to the contractor or their employer. |

Further information

This guide is one of a series produced by the Forestry Industry Safety Accord (FISA). Copies of this guide are available as electronic or hard copy via the UKFISA website shown below. There is also a wide range of additional safety information in relation to forestry on the FISA website, and in relation to arboriculture on the Arboricultural Association (AA) website.

For more general information about health and safety related to tree work, please visit the Health and Safety Executive website: www.hse.gov.uk/treework/index.htm

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