

17 December 2014

Health and Safety Update

1. Purpose

To provide the Commissioner's with an update on the management of health and safety in the Forestry Commission (FC).

2. Background/Introduction

In 2012 the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) convened a summit to meet with leaders in the forest industry to tackle the high rate of fatal and major injuries in the forestry. The Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA) was formed as a result of this summit meeting. Following on from this the FC has over the last two years increased our focus in order to improve our health and safety performance. The Forestry Commission Health and Safety Strategy was launched in June 2013.

3. Details

As part of the launch the Health and Safety Strategy Group asked teams from across the FC meet and discuss the Strategy and to feedback their thoughts on how the FC could manage health and safety better. The Group found teams to be fully engaged and received lots of detailed and well thought out feedback which is now being used to inform local and organisational Action Plans. The feedback indicated that we should focus on four key health and safety themes. In order of priority these are:

- culture change;
- training, mitigation and reporting;
- driver safety;
- lone working.

Health and Safety Committees are now well established in all areas across the organisation with good representation from management, staff and the Trade Unions. These committees are now working to deliver against the above themes using their national and local Action Plans.

The Health and Safety Strategy Group has purchased the Safety Climate Tool. This is an on-line survey software tool that helps organisations measure their safety culture, explore individual's attitudes and perceptions and provide evidence based improvement. The FC will run the survey in January 2015 to measure its safety culture baseline, identify areas

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where we can improve and in the future use it to evaluate our progress against the baseline.

Against this background the number of accidents in the FC remains broadly the same – see table below. In this context we must recognise that we are at the start of a journey and that culture change takes 5 – 10 years. The decrease in RIDDOR reportable accidents is good, but we must take cognisance of the fact that the Regulations changed in 2013 and this resulted in fewer accidents being reportable to HSE. The continued increase in reporting of near miss incidents is welcome as they give us an increasing opportunity to learn. We can identify the immediate and, more important root causes, of these accidents and incidents and so avoid more serious events.

	RIDDOR		Non-RIDDOR		Incidents
	No.	No. per 100k	No.	No. per 100k	No.
13/14	11	439	156	5791	599
12/13	21	707	136	4576	442

As always it is difficult to draw conclusions from such a relatively small number. However, there are areas that can be highlighted:

- Slips, trips and falls account for about 30% of accidents across the FC. They are the most common type of injury.
- Manual Handling accounts for about 20% of accidents across the FC. They are the second most common type of injury.
- In 2013/14 there were 6 accidents involving the use of chainsaws. These accidents tend to be “hit by” or “cuts” and tend to be high severity accident.

These trends are in line with HSE figures for forestry as a whole.

- We had 10 near miss incidents involving utilities (1 overhead and 9 underground). This adds to the 16 (1 overhead and 15 underground) we had last year.
- For vehicle accidents the most common types are reversing and roundabouts.

4. Resource Implications

The implementation of the Health and Safety Strategy and action plans do require a commitment of resource over a sustained period, particularly in terms of FC staff time. While there will be costs in some areas, there will also be some low cost measures that will result in improvements. Over time, some savings are likely to arise as was found in the construction industry where improvements in safety went hand in hand with improvements in efficiency.

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5. Risk Assessment

The emergence of the Forest Industry Safety Accord presents an opportunity for FC to work as part of an industry-wide collaborative effort to improve H&S performance. However, the following risks and controls exist in terms of the FC's management of Health and Safety.

Risk Component	Potential Consequences	Controls
Failure to provide strong H&S leadership and to establish a strong H&S culture and instead - continue to rely overly on process and systems.	No actual improvement in H&S performance despite investments in procedures and guidance.	Leaders and managers to lead the development of a strong H&S culture through effective engagement with staff to ensure that we all <i>Think Safe, Stay Safe</i>
FC engages in a piecemeal way with FISA.	Differing standards and potential enforcement / prosecution for accidents.	Senior FE representation on FISA Leadership Group and broad participation in Working Groups.

6. Communications Issues

We have representatives from the Communications team on the Health and Safety Strategy Group. They advised and supported the launch of the Health and Safety Strategy. They are advising on the launch of the Safety Climate Tool and will help with the communication of the results and follow up actions. The FC Communications team have also been working with FISA.

7. Implementation and Evaluation Proposals

There are no proposals for implementation or evaluation.

8. Recommendation

Commissioners are asked to note the ongoing work being done to change our health and safety culture and improve our performance.

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1 December 2014