

# Health and Safety Guidance for Forestry Work Manager in Selecting and Monitoring Contractors

Irish Forestry Safety Guide  
(IFSG)  
FC1



## Introduction

Forest operations on timber harvesting sites are high risk activities. The management of the various health and safety issues involving harvesting operations and timber haulage can be complex.

**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 Work Managers and Contractors**.

*See Table 1.*

Within each role, the effort demanded by a particular task depends on the complexity and extent of the risks involved. The greater the risks, the greater the effort needed. On forestry worksites where the Landowner directly engages contractors, the Landowner is responsible for the Forestry Work Manager (FWM) role.

The following guidance sets out your key duties and tasks as FWM in regard to the selection and monitoring of the health and safety performance of contractors engaged on the forestry worksite.

## Selection of competent contractors

The FWM should select contractors who have made adequate provision for health and safety. Establish the competence of contractors in terms of the forestry safety skills needed on site and their ability to manage health and safety.

The outline site risk assessment prepared by FWM, will have established some specific health and safety requirements that the contractors will have to meet. Make sure the contractors selected can deliver what is required.

When engaging new contractors, or ensuring that regular contractors are up to standard, the following questions may be useful.

## Safety skills questions for contractors

- What experience do they have?

Role	Definition	Examples
<b>Landowner</b>	The person or company in control of the land on which the forestry work takes place	Timber grower State and str Forestry ma behalf of pri
<b>Forestry Work Manager</b>	The person or company who commissions work on a forestry site	Anyone in th as part of th Timber purc
<b>Contractor</b>	The provider of a forestry service	Contracting sub-contrac Hauliers
<b>Subcontractor</b>	Anyone engaged by a contractor other than by direct employment	Anyone wor Anyone in a

Table 1. The four management roles, with definitions and examples.

- What training have they had and can they provide evidence of competence?
- Have they had any safety and health awareness or first-aid training?
- Do timber haulage contractors and their drivers have experience of working in the forest environment?

## Management skills questions for contractors

- How do they ensure that their sub-contractors have the relevant skills and experience and are competent?
- Do they have an up to date Safety Statement, including detailed risk assessments relevant to their work equipment and work activities?
- What features will machines and vehicles need to access and work the site safely?
- What tools and personal protective equipment will be needed on the site?
- How is their equipment maintained and are maintenance records available?

## of who may take on this role

owners such as farmers or estate owners with forested land  
state-sponsored bodies and local authorities  
management companies and land agents working on  
private and public owners

the landowner role directly engaging forestry contractors  
their business  
purchasers such as traders, processors and contractors

companies with their own employees or who take on  
contractors

working under contract to a contractor  
any of the other roles above who works on the site

- What control measures do they have in place to deal with the safety hazards identified in the site risk assessment?

## Monitoring safety and health on site

The FWM must look critically at what is happening on the work-site and take action if contractors fail to meet safety and health standards.

In the absence of the FWM on site, a **Site Safety Co-ordinator** should be designated to ensure that the agreed standards of safety and health are being met and to act as the point of contact for visiting contractors, such as hauliers.

A critical check needs to be made at the start of work on the site. You should satisfy yourself that contractors are working safely and that the agreed control measures on the site are effective.

The frequency of site safety audits/visits will depend on the FWM's knowledge of the contractors, the experience of the type of work for which they have been engaged, and the standards shown during previous visits. For an active harvesting worksite it is recommended that safety audits/visits should be made at least once per week. There may also be some areas of work on the site that require you to make more frequent visits for a time, for example, work near a public road.

Keeping monitoring records is a useful way of assessing the overall safety and health performance of contractors for future reference.

The FWM will have agreed appropriate control measures with the Contractor to be applied on the site, including the site safety rules, and risk assessment(s) relevant to site operations.

**Site safety rules and risk assessment(s) should be relevant and specific to the work on the site.**

Monitoring of the site safety rules could include the following (non exhaustive list):

- Public safety *for example, signs, taping-off areas and hazard zones*
- Health and safety of those working on site and not operating machinery
- Risk zones for safe operation of machines and other hazardous work, *for example, tree felling*
- Suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) to be worn generally and for specific work *for example, using chainsaws*
- Systems of work to deal with specific dangers *for example, hung-up trees, hazardous terrain, overhead power lines, wind blow and dangerous or edge trees*
- Working alone procedures, restrictions and communications *for example, procedures for 'last person in the forest'*
- Emergencies *for example, first-aid arrangements on the site, grid reference, mobile phone coverage and access by the emergency services*
- Arrangements for vehicle recovery
- Reporting of incidents *for example, accidents and near misses.*

**Further Information and Guidance:**

Visit our website at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie), telephone our contact centre on **1890 289 389** or email [wcu@hsa.ie](mailto:wcu@hsa.ie)

Use BeSMART, our free online risk assessment tool at [www.besmart.ie](http://www.besmart.ie)

Check out our range of free online courses at [www.hsalearning.ie](http://www.hsalearning.ie)



## Further reading

Available at [www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications\\_and\\_Forms/Publications/Agriculture\\_and\\_Forestry/](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/Agriculture_and_Forestry/)

- Code of Practice for 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
  - 303 - Chainsaw Snedding
  - 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

