



**HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE
AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ARBORICULTURE AND FORESTRY ADVISORY GROUP**

Meeting 11th of May 2011

EUROPEAN CHAINSAW CERTIFICATE (ECC) – UPDATE

Summary

- Work on the ECC has been accelerated recently.
- Some of the suggested safety standards are lower than those in the UK.
- There is a risk that standards of training, assessment and QA will be inconsistent across Europe.
- It is recommended that ECC should not be accepted as being equivalent to UK certification

1. Background

1.1 The Treaty of Rome and subsequent European legislation anticipated the free movement of EU citizens at will. The natural progression is standardization of qualifications to assist individuals to use them throughout the EU. In essence this means that a qualified worker can pick up work throughout the EU.

1.2 In forestry there are safety considerations so a qualified person requires to be totally conversant with safe working practices, the principles of which form a large part of training.

1.3 A European project was set up to standardise training in tree work, the potential outcome being certificates of competency within tree work, allowing holders to work in other countries. A number of meetings have been held. UK standards are amongst the highest in the EU, despite which there is an unacceptably high accident rate. Therefore from the UK perspective any EU certificate must be of equivalent or higher standard.

2. Timetable

2.1 The EU project was proceeding slowly until the beginning of 2011 but has latterly been accelerated with a view to completion by early June so that it could be announced and commenced at a major forestry show in Germany. The project chairperson is also chief executive of the European Forestry Contractors Association, having recently taken over from Mr Barrie Hudson, formerly of the “old” but now defunct FCA in GB. The “new” FCA is led by Donald Maclean.

3. Safety Content

3.1 In the meantime, despite the best efforts of Billy Robb, the project manager, the new certificates have only a minimum of safety content in training. For example, in Belgium it is acceptable to wear safety spectacles and ear-muffs while felling. Candidates are often tested on trees of very small diameter – 100mm is not unusual. Consequently the assessment is less detailed. There is a great deal of difficulty in accepting that a candidate, having been “trained” by one “trainer”, shouldn’t be assessed by another in the same firm.

3.2 Some essential content is not contained within basic units; for example take down of hung-up trees is not assessed in EC2 (felling small trees) but is covered in underpinning knowledge only. Obviously it is not considered necessary for the client to be competent in this potentially hazardous task.

4. Quality Assurance

4.1 Quality assurance is the basis of consistency in training but varies considerably throughout the EU. This was discussed but certain countries indicated that they were content with their standards and that there was little need to change. If this flexibility is adopted there is a risk of an inconsistent approach across Europe.

5. Recommendation

5.1 Regretably and despite many meetings attended, the advice to employers in the UK remains that if presented with foreign certificates, they should give the individual supervised work and make a decision on the competence and training in the light of performance, arranging competence testing if appropriate. They should not take the EFESC Certificate at face value as being equivalent to the UK standard.

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