

Welcome to the third edition of Tree Work News, HSE's e-newsletter for the arboriculture and forestry industries.

Chainsaws continue to kill

In the last few months, two more arborists have been killed when using a chainsaw, highlighting again the need for users to be properly trained. Lack of training continues to be the subject of enforcement action by HSE Inspectors.

HSE is continuing to work with the industry, through the Arboriculture and Forestry Advisory Group (AFAG), to look at ways of improving standards and getting key messages across. If you can contribute please let us know either by contacting Frances Hirst at frances.hirst@hse.gsi.gov.uk or joining the AFAG public communities site: <http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/afagpublic/grouphome>.

Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs)

HSE's programme of SHADs for forestry and arboriculture are continuing into 2009/10.

The 'Engaging Arboricultural Contractors' events are aimed at the clients who employ arborists and aim to improve their:

- understanding of the legal framework that arboricultural contractors have to work in;
- recognition of industry good practice;
- understanding of the principles of risk assessment systems employed in arboriculture; and
- selection of appropriate contractors and their ability to monitor and review them.

A very wide cross section of clients and employers have already benefitted from attending these SHADs, including local authorities, housing associations, construction companies, NHS trusts, Network Rail, landscapers, Highways Agency, utility companies, universities and colleges of FE, schools, national organisations such as the National Trust, the Forestry Commission and land agents. Previous events have been very well received by attendees with vast majority proposing to make changes in the way they select and monitor the arborists they employ.

The first of this year's Arb SHADs is to be held at Houghall College, Durham on 16 June, followed by events at Coleg Gwent, Usk Campus, on 21 July and at a venue to be confirmed in Hampshire on 22 July. A fourth event is planned for London later in the year. Attendance is by invitation so we can arrange suitable facilities and refreshments. If you would like to attend one of the events, further information is available from Frances Hirst at frances.hirst@hse.gsi.gov.uk.

Due to demand from the industry, HSE is running a series of SHADs for the forestry industry in the first half of 2009.

Forestry SHADs have been developed in partnership with the industry and are being delivered by trainers who have years of experience working in forestry. The events are being run by HSE in conjunction with the Forestry Commission's Learning and Development department (previously Forest Training Services). They have been very popular and those attending previous events have found them to be beneficial and enjoyable.



Recent HSE publications

AFAG308(rev1) *Top-handled chainsaws*
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/afag308.pdf

AFAG401(rev1) *Tree-climbing operations*
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/afag401.pdf

Single hard copies are available free from HSE Books, or priced packs of 15.

Following suggestions from those attending previous Forestry SHADs they are now targeted at all of those involved in forestry operations, including forestry work managers, site safety co-ordinators, contractors and operators.

Each event reflects the type of forestry work taking place in the area and working scenarios are acted out based on situations that have led to serious and even fatal accidents, including using chainsaws and forest forwarders. The experienced industry trainers will also deal with other significant hazards, including hand-arm and whole-body vibration, noise, public access, and working with contractors.

The three events listed for 2009 include: 15 April Galloway Forest, Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire; 12 May Dalby Forest, Pickering, North Yorkshire Moors and 14 May Fineshade Wood, Rockingham Forest, Nr Corby, Northamptonshire. These events are by invitation only and you can get further details from Simon Parry at simon.parry@hse.gsi.gov.uk. Future plans may see Forestry SHADs taking place in Grampian, Dyfed and Devon.

Updated AFAG308 and AFAG401

AFAG leaflets 308 *Top-handled chainsaws* and 401 *Tree-climbing operations* have recently been revised. These include two significant changes relating to the selection and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) which arborists need to be aware of.

Both now contain the following wording for head protection for use during aerial work:

'A safety helmet (HSE strongly recommends a mountaineering style helmet complying with BS EN12492).'

For chainsaw protective trousers they both include the following:

'Leg protection and groin protection (complying with BS EN 381-5). HSE strongly recommends Type C leg protection for aerial work, because of the high all-round chainsaw cut protection. However, where wearing Type C is impractical (eg because of the higher risk of heat stress associated with it), it may be appropriate to use Type A, where justified by risk assessment.'

The wording relating to the provision of aerial rescue in AFAG308 has also been updated to bring it into line with existing guidance in AFAG401. Both documents now contain the following advice:

'A minimum of two people must be present during all tree-climbing operations. One of the team must be available on the ground, competent and equipped to perform an aerial rescue without delay.'

Copies of the revised leaflets are available to download free from HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/forindex.htm.

AFAG update

Latest meeting

AFAG held its 15th meeting at the Forestry Commission HQ, Edinburgh on 15 October 2008. The main aim was to review progress on AFAG's current projects and its Terms of Reference and Workplan for 2008-09 and beyond. The meeting was chaired by Alan Plom as the Head of Sector, Roger Nourish, had recently moved to a new position in HSE's Hazardous Installations Division. Members recalled the significant effort and support that Roger has given to the industry over many years through AFAG and wished him well in his new post.

The next AFAG meeting will be held on 21 May 2009, at Lantra House, Stoneleigh.

Impact of the recession on health and safety

AFAG acknowledged the current difficulties faced by the forestry industry, following the collapse of orders from the building industry and competition from imported timber. Members were concerned that this would lead to a reduction in training and decline in standards employed, but all agreed that this made AFAG's work – producing sensible and practical guidance with the industry – all the more important, as it will help businesses avoid the cost and burden of accidents. The industry was assured that Business Impact Assessments are required for any new Government initiatives and these would need to take account of the current financial situation.

New AFAG members

Two new members were welcomed: Imogen Mole representing the National Association of Tree Officers and Alex Laver representing the International Society of Arboriculture.

Research update

Three important research projects have recently been completed:

- Forestry intervention appraisal and evaluation framework.
- Rigging and dismantling techniques in arboriculture.
- Mechanically-assisted take down of edge trees.

These will inform future AFAG guidance. The rigging research is available at: www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr668.htm and the other reports will be published on HSE's Research webpage shortly. Summaries will be made available via the AFAG webpage and *Tree Work News*.

Review of Chainsaw Certification

The Sector Skills Council (Lantra) has spent the last two years in discussion with the forestry and arboricultural industries, through their Trees and Timber Industry Group, to revise the National Occupational Standards (NOSs) for chainsaw users.

As a result of this, all of the chainsaw units in the NPTC Certificate of Competence have been reviewed by a select group of chainsaw operators, including employers/contractors, trainers and assessors from arboricultural and forestry backgrounds. The content of each of the revised units is directly taken from the NOS. The new structure has been developed and proposed as a result of the consultation feedback from 2008.

As with earlier revisions, chainsaw units previously achieved will continue to be valid after the revised Chainsaw Certificate of Competence units are released, as long as regular refresher training has been undertaken.

The timescale for City & Guilds NPTC's review of the current Certificates of Competence (CoCs) has been extended to allow the review of the NOS, on which the qualifications are based, to be completed.

The revised CoCs can be viewed at www.nptc.org.uk/latest-news/detail.asp?dsid=347. This site also includes a number of documents which explain the structure and the content and assessment of each unit.

These changes are only proposals, and it is not too late to have your say, so please send your comments on the proposed structure and units to consultation@nptc.org.uk by **14 April 2009**.

If you need any further information, please contact:

Sally Green, Assistant Technical Officer, City & Guilds NPTC, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG. Direct line: 024 76857356; Mobile: 077954 95156; Switchboard: 024 76857300; e-mail: sally.green@nptc.org.uk.

Trees and Timber National Occupational Standards (NOSs)

It is important to remember that these standards are continually 'under review'. It is vital that people working in the industry contribute to the development of these 'task-based' descriptions as they determine the structure of training and qualifications. AFAG has expressed its concern to Lantra SSC that few in the industry understand or appreciate the significance of the NOSs, and Lantra is working hard to rectify this. James Brown (member of AFAG) has recently taken over as chair of Lantra's Trees and Timber Industry Group and is seeking new members to contribute to this process.

Development of European Chainsaw Standard

Work on comparing the standards and training requirements across Europe for chainsaw use with a view to developing a European chainsaw standard is continuing. Certificates issued in different member states can then be compared with this European standard and endorsed if the standard is met. The responses to this work are being collated by City & Guilds NPTC. The next meeting is being held on 31 March 2009 in Arnhem and the UK reps include Steve Hewitt (City & Guilds NPTC) and James Brown (on behalf of LANTRA and AFAG).

If you would like regular updates on the work of City & Guilds NPTC you can sign up for their monthly e-newsletter at www.cityandguilds.com/updates.

Project updates

Causes of accidents in tree work

The Project Group is to meet to discuss how to make best use of the findings of the research.

Training and certification

Since the last AFAG meeting, a Focus Group for the Arboriculture Industry has met (chaired by the Arb Association's Simon Richmond). This group discussed the feasibility of establishing a system for the industry to record informal (on the job etc) training, as well as formal qualifications and other ways to demonstrate competence. Meanwhile James Brown (CONFOR) has been consulting members of the forestry industry for their views.

AFAG decided to convene a small group to devise a checklist to help employers ensure employees have the correct training and competence for the work required. This will be incorporated into a revised AFAG805 *Training and certification*.

Work at height

As well as the revised AFAG401 *Tree-climbing operations* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/afag401.pdf), the Arb Association's *A guide to the use of MEWPs in arboriculture* has also been published and is available from the Arb Association www.trees.org.uk/publications.php.

Communications

The **AFAG 'communities site'** is now up and running at: <http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/afagpublic/grouphome>. This is for the public and those working in the industry and provides a platform for anyone:

- to highlight issues to AFAG;
- to actively participate in AFAG's work; and
- to find out what AFAG is doing and why.

Work is also underway to develop a **Tree Work website**, to provide easy, direct access to the full range of guidance as well as sharing other information and good practice. We are also developing podcasts and a 'safety alert' system. If you have any ideas on what topics you would like to see included on this site please contact Frances Hirst at frances.hirst@hse.gsi.gov.uk.

New work

Three new projects are being included in AFAG's Workplan for 2008/09:

- Reducing chainsaw accidents in tree work.
- Safe tree work near overhead power lines.
- Management of health and safety at forestry sites (including the role of the site safety co-ordinator and lone working).

Meet HSE staff

HSE will be represented at the following events:

- Arboricultural Association Trade Fair, Bathurst Estate, Cirencester 26-27 June 2009
- IOG Saltex, Windsor Racecourse 8-10 September 2009

Please take the opportunity to come and discuss your concerns about any health and safety issue with us.

Your views

If you have any issues or concerns you would like to share with AFAG, HSE and the industry please let us know.

Send your views to Frances Hirst at the address below.

To receive this newsletter by e-mail in future please send your e-mail address to:

frances.hirst@hse.gsi.gov.uk

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Further information

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