

Tree Work News

Newsletter of the Agriculture and Food Sector for all involved in forestry and arboriculture

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

Chainsaws continue to kill

We need your help

Several terrible accidents have been reported in the media over recent months – ironically including a fatality on the very day that HSE was running a Health and Safety Awareness Day aimed at the forestry industry in the New Forest in March. This reinforces our commitment to help ensure that training and certification meets the industry needs. **However, we cannot do this alone.**

Consultation on Chainsaw Certificates of Competence

NPTC are currently reviewing the structure of their Certificates of Competence in chainsaw and related operations. The aim is to simplify the structure and reduce duplication, so now is the time to have your say. NPTC have already spoken to a range of people across the industry, including AFAG, but it is important that as many of those working in the industry as possible are involved in this review. Please contact NPTC direct for further information: www.nptc.org.uk.

European Standard in Chainsaw Qualification

A conference organised and supported by Inverde vzw, IPC Groene Ruimte, the European Network of Forest Entrepreneurs, and the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Experts Network is being held in Brussels on 19 and 20 June. The purpose of the event is to bring together all stakeholders who make use of chainsaws to discuss the possible development of a European Standard in Chainsaw Qualification. For more information, go to www.inverde.be.

AFAG update

The Arboriculture and Forestry Advisory Group (AFAG) held an important two-day meeting on 2-3 April to review progress on the various projects set up as part of the AFAG Workplan for 2005-2008 and to identify the most important issues for AFAG to look at in 2008/09, and beyond.

Three new members were welcomed to their first meeting, including Ros Johnson from Lantra (the Sector Skills Council), Alex Murray (representing the UKFPA) and Des Campbell from the Northern Ireland Forest Service. Other guests included Steve Hewitt (NPTC), Natasha Perry (Bomel Ltd), Martin Lennon (UPM Tillhill) and Tony Bird (Lantra).

All AFAG papers are available on the AFAG webpage www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/hsc/iacs/aiaf/afag/index.htm, but here is a summary of the key issues discussed at the meeting:

Training and certification

Much of the meeting was spent discussing this project and AFAG will be consulting the industry more widely in the coming months, through separate 'focus groups' for the arboriculture and forestry sectors. These groups will be looking in particular at the need and possible options for the ways in which continuing professional development (CPD) could be used to form a nationally recognised, auditable and credible structure to acknowledge individual operators' training, certification and career progression.



Recent HSE publications

Whole-body vibration of ground preparation activities in forestry RR636
www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/index.htm

Safe use of work equipment. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice Third edition ISBN 978 0 7176 6295 1 (Includes amendments to the PUWER Regulations where amended or superseded by other regulations. The references have been updated and obsolete information removed.)

AFAG Members' comments have been sent to NPTC on their Review of Chainsaw Certification but individuals and businesses working in the industry are still encouraged to read the proposals and respond directly.

Ways to improve how AFAG works and communicates with those working in the industry were also discussed, so that it delivers what the industry needs, more quickly. This included how to make it easier for those in the industry to find out what AFAG is currently doing, to raise issues directly with the group and provide input into all areas of their work.

Methods to record training and CPD

Evidence on this is increasingly required by clients. AFAG considered ways to record information for individuals and businesses. Lantra (Sector Skills Council) has developed an 'Online Competence Framework' system which is now available via their website www.ruralslp.co.uk/Index.aspx. This could be adapted for the tree-work sector as the framework is based on the 'national occupational standards' developed through Lantra's 'Trees and Timber' Group, which includes representatives from many of the industry's trade organisations.

Although AFAG is not formally endorsing the Lantra scheme it has the potential to address the needs of many in the industry. However, further wide consultation is needed – this will be discussed at the two new sector focus groups previously mentioned, but your comments are invited:

<http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/afagpublic/grouphome>.

Impact on businesses

Government departments (including HSE) are now required to assess the impact on businesses of any new guidance or arrangements put in place. This is intended to ensure not only that no unnecessary costs or 'red-tape' are imposed on the industry, but also to evaluate the benefits of introducing any new measures. AFAG supports this initiative and member organisations have agreed to work with HSE to provide the background information required for Business Impact Assessments (eg on costs **and benefits** of training and certification to individual businesses and the industry collectively) as soon as possible. If you are able to help by providing any information on the economic impact on your business, then please let us know. Contact alan.plom@hse.gsi.gov.uk.

Update on other projects

Research into causes of tree-work accidents

Bomel presented a summary of their major research project commissioned by HSE. By analysing data on reported accidents and talking to forestry workers, a detailed picture of the highest-risk activities in tree work had been built up. Also on what leads operators to take risks – even though they know this could lead to serious or even fatal injuries. **It is clear that the majority of serious and major injuries are still related to chainsaw use.** Further information has been requested, including incidence rates (ie relating the actual number of operators exposed to particular risks/activities). We now need to consult the industry to obtain this data. The full report will be published on HSE's website in the next couple of months.

The findings of the project group, and particularly the results of Bomel's research, will be used to target AFAG resources to high-risk areas of the industry.

Steep ground working

This project has been successfully completed and guidance (AFAG705) produced. Your views on further developing this guidance will be sought through the 'Community' website – watch this space for the topic to be raised:
<http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/afagpublic/grouphome>.

Working safely at height

AFAG401 is currently being redrafted. The Arb Association's draft 'Arboricultural MEWP Operator's Guide' is now available for **comments by 30 June 2008** on their website: www.trees.org.uk/consultpage.php.

Rigging and dismantling

The research has been completed and the report is currently awaiting approval for publication. Guidance will then be prepared by AA and AFAG.

Machine-assisted takedown of trees

Research is currently being carried out and the report is expected soon. Again this will inform new guidance on systems of work to reduce the risk to machine operators.

Occupational Health Services

A pilot project has been started in Scotland, working in partnership with the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland and 'Healthy Working Lives'.

Noise exposure from mobile wood chippers

The research has been completed by HSL and published on HSE's website. Issues raised will be taken forward with manufacturers and those using this type of machinery in 2008 onwards.

Whole-body vibration

The Forestry Commission (FC) agreed to allow their guidance for managers to be adapted for wider use within the industry. An Agriculture Information Sheet (AIS) incorporating the findings of recent research by HSL is also currently being finalised and will be issued as soon as possible.

Promotion of best practice in arboriculture and forestry

A number of innovative approaches are being developed using electronic communication methods. The recent SHAD held in the New Forest was filmed (by a Sky Sports film crew!) for use in producing a series of 'podcasts' and training material. Thanks to all delegates who (unexpectedly) found themselves being filmed during the event and for being very patient. Also for not being intimidated by the presence of the cameras – their comments and stories recounting their own experiences will add significantly to the content and relevance of the podcasts to the industry. Agreement has also been reached with Worksafe BC (Canada) for HSE to use their e-resources (such as podcasts, hazard alerts, investigation reports) without charge. Check out their website <http://www.worksafebc.com/default.asp>.

Also, following requests from a number of attendees to forestry SHADs, HSE is reviewing the format with a view to developing an event aimed at Directors/Board Members. Please let us know if you would like to be informed of this or any other SHAD. Contact simon.parry@hse.gsi.gov.uk for information on 'Forestry' SHADS and frances.hirst@hse.gsi.gov.uk for information on 'Engaging arboricultural clients' SHADs.

Communications

Work has started on developing the new 'Tree Work' Website which will replace HSE's existing Forestry Website and two new AFAG 'community' websites have been launched. One is for AFAG or Project Group Members to share information and progress work outside meetings, but the other is for those working in the industry to communicate their views directly with AFAG members and others in the industry. This will allow anyone to:

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

The industry site is:

<http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/afagpublic/grouphome>.

Note All information provided at registration will be treated as confidential and will not be used by HSE or any other organisation for any other purpose.

What next?

AFAG members discussed what issues should be given priority in 2008 onwards. They considered the outcomes of AFAG's current project work and also those issues highlighted by the industry as a priority. Preventing chainsaw-related accidents was identified as a major priority. Other topics highlighted included:

- Providing guidance on lone working and site management.
- Promotion of good practice.
- Working near overhead power lines.
- Musculoskeletal disorders and occupational health – including provision of support for those working in the industry, eg to help identify and ease suffering from hand-arm vibration, white finger disease, hearing loss, bad backs etc.

Recent tree-work prosecutions

Work near overhead power lines

A company was prosecuted after employees contacted a live uninsulated 11 kV overhead power line (OHPL) while carrying out arboricultural work at a school. The trees involved were less than 3 m from the OHPL. The lines were brought down and the power supply disrupted but luckily no one was injured. The company had not contacted the owner of the lines to arrange for lines to be made dead before starting work. The company was prosecuted under regulation 14 of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 and fined £3334.00 plus £2143.00 costs.

Using an untrained worker

An untrained person – with no chainsaw qualifications at all – was allowed to undertake sectional dismantling of a tree. He fell about 7 m from the tree, suffering serious injuries, when he accidentally cut through his single unprotected strop. The company was prosecuted under regulation 4 of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 because the work was not properly planned, appropriately supervised or carried out in a manner which was, so far as was reasonably practicable, safe. They were fined £17 000 with £350 costs.

Recent enforcement notices

Prohibition notices have been issued covering:

- having no one on site capable of carrying out aerial rescue;
- lack of chainsaw PPE;
- defective guarding on a wood fuel machine.

Improvement notices have been issued covering:

- defective guarding on a wood chipper;
- inadequate site risk assessment;
- chainsaw training.

Tree-climbing fatality – What lessons can be learnt?

In 2007 a tree climber was fatally injured while removing a large timber section which became entangled in his climbing rope. The force involved was sufficient to break an adjustable lanyard, which formed his single attachment point, and pull him from the tree. Jeremy Lawton, an NPTC assessor and Lantra-registered instructor who was involved in the investigation into the accident, highlights the key lessons learned and makes some general observations.

Training, expertise and supervision

- Individuals and organisations must have the knowledge and expertise to make informed health and safety decisions.

- Tree-climbing operations must only be performed by people with suitable training, experience and expertise, holding a Certificate of Competence relevant to the task they are performing. It is important to note that a Certificate of Competence is not a measure of experience. The inexperienced must be adequately supervised.

Best practice for tree-climbing operations

Planning and preparation: Discuss and plan the job beforehand, prepare a risk assessment and emergency contingencies. Remember that the job is a team effort – ground staff should support and monitor the climber at all times. If observations are made that cause concern, notify the climber, using the agreed system of communication.

Pre-work checks: Before starting the saw and removing any material, check that any components connected to the climber (climbing ropes, strops etc) are placed in a 'safe position' away from the risks of entanglement or damage. Check for correct positioning of any rigging or lowering systems that may be in use. Be vigilant throughout all aspects of the operation.

Anchor points: When sectional felling ('topping down') stems a minimum of two attachment/anchor points should be used. The advice given in the current edition of *A guide to good climbing practice* (Arboricultural Association) illustrates this and gives useful advice (ref: page 35, section 7.5).

Climbing system and associated equipment: There is a wide range of equipment available which can improve the efficiency of tree-climbing operations. However, if new components are added to a climbing system, the climber must be fully familiar with their correct use and application.

Aerial rescue provision: There must be a second person available equipped, trained and **capable** of performing an aerial rescue in the event of an emergency.

General observations: Remember that accidents do not only happen to the inexperienced – the time served professional is also vulnerable. Adherence to the key fundamentals learned in training (and highlighted in industry publications) will significantly reduce the risks of accidents.

Meet HSE staff

HSE will be represented at the following events:

- Arboricultural Association Trade Fair, Bathurst Estate Cirencester 13-14 June 2008
- IOG Saltex, Windsor Race Course 4-6 September 2008
- Arboricultural Association Annual Conference, University of Kent 14-17 September 2008
- APF, Cannock Chase, Staffordshire 18-20 September 2008

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

Further information

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk (HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops and free leaflets can be downloaded from HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk.)

For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055 Fax: 0845 408 9566 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: hse.infoline@natbrit.com or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.

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:

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