

Chainsaw Training and Assessment

◆SIM 01/2004/02

Target Audience:

FOD SG Inspectors, FOD Agriculture and Food Inspectors

Date issued: 2004-02-10	OG Status: Partially Open
Review date: 2008-02-10	Author Unit/Section: Strategy, Evaluation, Forestry and Arboriculture

SUMMARY

Training and assessment of chainsaw operators in forestry and arboriculture has been through a period of considerable uncertainty and confusion. The situation has now been resolved and this SIM outlines the current arrangements

BACKGROUND

1. Providers offering chainsaw training courses for those in the land based industries (e.g. agriculture, forestry, arboriculture and fencing/hedging) used to either follow the Forestry and Arboriculture Safety and Training Council's (FASTco) set of course outlines; Lantra's (the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based industries); or alternatively devised their own courses. In the main, FASTco courses were aimed at forestry and arboriculture, and Lantra courses for agriculture. However there was considerable overlap in some subject areas, and concerns were raised about disparities in the quality and adequacy of the training.
2. Chainsaw assessment – to determine basic competency after training had been completed – was carried out by either the National Proficiency Test Council (NPTC) or Lantra Awards. NPTC assessment was fully independent of the training provider, whereas Lantra integrated the training and assessment and provided a 'one-stop shop'.
3. These different training routes and different assessment routes led to a confusing overall picture for those seeking training and assessment and conflicts between the different primary organisations. This was not helpful to anyone including HSE.
4. FASTco no longer exists, and most its work has been taken on by the Trees and Timber Group which operates within Lantra Sector Skills Council. This has led to a period of extensive industry consultation and talks between the main players, resulting in new agreements and a partnership between Lantra and NPTC. This partnership has devised and implemented a common system for chainsaw training.
5. This SIM provides an overview of the new system and procedures.

DETAILS

6. The partnership system between NPTC and Lantra Awards has been operating fully from the 1st September 2003 and is based on two broad categories of chainsaw user:

- 1) '*Occasional*' or *basic users*: Someone who intends to use a chainsaw but does not intend to work in forestry or arboriculture or fell trees more than 200mm in diameter. Generally these users will be working e.g. in agriculture, landscaping, fencing/hedging, environmental conservation or simple highways maintenance.
- 2) '*professional*' or *more frequent users*: Someone working in forestry and arboriculture or carrying out higher risk work, for example felling trees greater than 200mm in diameter, working from a rope and harness or dealing with windblow or hung up trees.

7. A flow chart showing the relationship between courses, awards and qualifications is shown in Figure 1.

8. 'Occasional' users are directed by Lantra Awards and NPTC to choose courses that cover chainsaw maintenance, cross-cutting and basic felling up to 200mm in diameter at felling height. Successful candidates receive a Lantra Awards' Integrated Training and Assessment (ITA) certificate of basic training and an ID card.

9. 'Professional' users are directed towards a much broader range of Lantra Awards courses that incorporate the best of the previous FASTco course structure with the existing Lantra Awards provision. These courses are *training-only* courses. On completion, the trainee is provided with a Certificate of Attendance (provided they have met all the course objectives).

10. The training equips trainees with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to go forward for *Independent assessment* with an NPTC assessor at a later date. If they achieve the necessary standard during assessment, the trainee will be awarded an NPTC Certificate of Competence relating to the unit(s) they have taken.

11. The core NPTC qualifications are CS30.1 – Maintenance of the Chainsaw and CS30.2 – On-site preparation and basic cross cutting. In arboriculture, there is an additional core unit CS38 – Climb Trees and perform aerial rescue. Users are then able to progress through the qualification structure (Figure 1) to build on additional units.

12. All of the NPTC Schedules detailing the content of each unit are available from the NPTC website.

13. Existing qualifications remain valid, and refresher training is available for experienced operators following the refresher training intervals recommended in IND 317 Chainsaws at Work and AFAG 805. Holders of ITAs from previous Lantra courses completed before these arrangements came into place will come under increasing pressure from clients, landowners, and employers to hold NPTC Certificates. Discounted registration rates are available to ease this change over.

14. Information on training courses, registered training providers in particular areas, and on the best route for operators or companies to take is available from Lantra Awards Tel: 024 7641 9703.

Enquiries about independent competency assessment leading to a Certificate of Competence is available from NPTC Tel: 024 7669 6553.

15. Training providers are also still free to devise their own chainsaw training schemes, and trainees can be put forward for assessment through NPTC. However, registered specialist instructors are more likely to be up to date with best practice and are subject to Lantra Awards' quality control procedures.

ACTION BY INSPECTORS

16. The Agriculture and Food Sector considers that a relevant ITA Certificate or a relevant NPTC Certificate of Competence will in most cases be sufficient to demonstrate adequate training under Regulation 9 of PUWER, and meet the approved guidance in the PUWER ACoP. However it is important to check that the ITA or Certificate of Competence is relevant to the task being performed (e.g. an ITA or CS30 is not appropriate for felling medium trees) and how recently it was achieved.

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CHAINSAW USE IN OTHER OCCUPATIONS

21. Users of chainsaws in other industries or occupations must also be adequately trained under Regulation 9 of PUWER. Competent trainers, including those from the Lantra register of instructors, can draw up appropriate training programmes. CITB provides construction related basic training. NPTC is willing to consider devising qualifications for other occupations e.g. they offer a unit on felling utility poles.

REFERENCES

IND G 317 Chainsaws at work

AFAG 805 Training and Certification

PUWER ACoP and Guidance – regulation 9
Date first issued: 10th January 2004

¹ Exemption 4 – Law enforcement and legal proceedings

Figure 1

