

“If your pay’s not going up, you’re not going to progress anything – why would you stick around?”

TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN FORESTRY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research sought to understand the issues facing the forestry industry in terms of their workforce development and training. The research has affirmed the current understanding that WorkSafe has of workforce development and training in this sector (discussed below).

The forestry industry has an ageing workforce and employers in the industry struggle to recruit workers. The recruitment challenges are believed to be partially caused by the negative health and safety reputation the industry has, both in the media and the community. Recruitment challenges are also associated with lack of a defined career path in the forestry industry and significant downward wage pressure. However, employers in the industry have expressed an interest in instilling professionalism, which they consider would address reputational concerns and also provide workers with a clear idea of a range of career paths open to them in the sector.

The industry is also characterised by less formal working arrangements, which evidence suggests affects health and safety outcomes. Many contractors fulfil a unique pastoral role with crew members as a means of addressing both labour recruitment and retention issues, in particular the impact that community and home life has on worker retention and performance in relation to drugs and alcohol consumption.

The external training in the industry is viewed as being of low quality and difficult to access, particularly the off-site entry-level courses, which are seen as not providing a realistic understanding of the forestry working environment and subsequently those who graduate have no real understanding of the workplace they encounter. To address this,

many corporate owners and principals are employing their own internal trainer/assessors to provide instruction on-site so that their workers are able to gain the qualifications necessary to carry out the work and have relevant site understanding.

On-site training was the most desired form of instruction. While some crew members were keen for a limited session in a quiet classroom environment, they wanted the majority of training to be conducted on site, and in a practical format where they learnt by doing. This was also the desired format of contractors and owners/principals.

A key theme was a focus on documented assessment and attainment of qualifications which could then be used to demonstrate competency to undertake specific tasks on site to WorkSafe, corporate owners and principals. The compliance approach has been driven, in part, by WorkSafe's perceived push for documentation, and is an adverse effect of the assessment drive undertaken by WorkSafe since 2013.

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INTRODUCTION

IN THIS SECTION:

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 Method
- 1.3 Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Forestry sector is one of WorkSafe's four priority sectors, with a high incidence of injuries and fatalities. WorkSafe has had a dedicated Forestry programme, since 2010. The programme is currently in a phase of revisiting and developing its future work plan. To inform the next phase of the programme, the project team requested research to understand what changes have occurred in the sector, and what the catalysts (both internal and external) for these changes were. The primary purpose of this research was to understand what changes have taken place in the sector and the association these changes may have with changes in injury and fatality outcomes in the sector. The research sought to document internal and external influences on the sector and in addition, the role that WorkSafe has played in bringing about change or practice and health and safety outcomes.

As such, the research has a wider focus than training and workforce development; and due to the quality and quantity of data obtained during the fieldwork, the research team have developed a further six topic-specific reports, of which this is one. Other topic reports cover:

- > Worker Engagement, Participation and Representation
- > small-scale forestry
- > work-related health
- > silviculture
- > the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015) and accessing information on Health and Safety.

The insights from the Forestry sector research have relevance for WorkSafe's three other focus sectors (Agriculture, Construction and Manufacturing) and its fifth national programme (the Canterbury Rebuild), as well as wider initiatives such as the *Reducing Harm in New Zealand Workplaces* Action Plan, *Maruiti 2025*, and the *Healthy Work* Strategic Plan.

1.2 METHOD

The research involved interviews and focus groups with over 100 industry members across owners, principals, contractors and crews; interviews with WorkSafe Inspectors and Assessment Managers, analysis of WorkSafe and ACC Claims data, analysis of data from WorkSafe's Health and Safety Attitudes and Behaviour (HSAB) survey, and a review of existing studies. (See Appendix A for a detailed description of the methods employed).

1.3 INTRODUCTION

Whilst forestry has been an area of specific focus for WorkSafe and its predecessors since 2010, the industry experienced a high number of deaths in 2013, when 10 workers were killed whilst at work. Following this, the forestry industry commissioned an Independent Forestry Safety Review¹ that was published in October 2014. The government's initial response to the review was also published in October 2014, and laid out the actions it would take under four broad areas: Strengthening Forestry Leadership, Strengthening Regulatory Standards, Strengthening Enforcement, and Strengthening the Workforce.² The response highlighted the need for industry

¹ For more information, see: www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/employment-skills/workplace-health-and-safety-reform/document-and-image-library/independent-forestry-safety-review/independent-forestry-safety-review.pdf

² For more information, see: www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/employment-skills/workplace-health-and-safety-reform/document-and-image-library/independent-forestry-safety-review/initial-government-response.pdf

and government to work together to bring about the change required to have an impact on the rates of fatalities and severe injuries in the sector. The following issues were identified by WorkSafe in its submission to the independent review as underlying the industry's safety performance:

- > the supply chain
- > undervaluing safety
- > competency deficits
- > poor safety culture, and;
- > insufficient investment in forest harvesting infrastructure.

WIDER HEALTH AND SAFETY CHANGES

The work being undertaken in the Forestry sector followed the Pike River mine disaster which resulted in the loss of 29 lives, and led to the Royal Commission on the Pike River Coal Mine Tragedy.³ Following the report on Pike River (October 2012), the government commissioned an independent taskforce review of workplace health and safety, to advise on ways to meet a goal of reducing the rate of workplace fatalities and serious injuries by 25 percent by 2020.⁴ The taskforce reported back in April 2013, and called for 'an urgent, sustainable step-change in harm prevention activity and a dramatic improvement in outcomes to the point where this country's workplace health and safety performance is recognised among the best in the world in 10 years' time'. In October 2013, the government responded with *Working Safer: A blueprint for health and safety at work*.⁵ The Blueprint laid out a programme of work until the end of 2016, and included the creation of WorkSafe New Zealand and the introduction of the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015).

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

The Taskforce⁴ identified 'Major capacity and capability constraints among workers, managers, health and safety practitioners, business leaders and the regulator,' and concluded that there is a causal link between these issues and New Zealand's poor workplace health and safety record. The Taskforce recommended the development of a workforce development strategy, led by WorkSafe to address the capacity and capability constraints.

*Working Safer*⁵ then outlined Government's commitment to address and bridge the capability and capacity gaps; with WorkSafe to lead the development and implementation of a Workforce Development strategy. The strategy's objective is to: detect gaps where health and safety capability and capacity is lacking (and a corollary to areas where risk of serious harm and injury is high); outline interventions; and, in collaboration with industry and other key stakeholders, bridge the gaps and consequently improve workplace health and safety outcomes.

WorkSafe has allocated specific resource to address workforce development across all industries. The team conducted a scan of the issues facing industry members to get greater depth of information to inform the Workforce Development Strategy. The strategy has five guiding principles to ensure a robust approach to workforce development interventions.

³ For more information, see: <http://pikeriver.royalcommission.govt.nz/Final-Report>

⁴ For more information, see: <http://hstaskforce.govt.nz/documents/report-of-the-independent-taskforce-on-workplace-health-safety.pdf>

⁵ For more information, see: www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/employment-skills/workplace-health-and-safety-reform/document-and-image-library/working-safer-key-documents/safety-first-blueprint.pdf

These are: awareness; availability; accessibility; alignment; and assurance.⁶ High-level findings from an initial workforce development scan⁷ suggest:

- > **Workers:** have a patchy awareness of health and safety risks (both injury and health risks). This is caused in part by a lack of focus on health and safety as part of education (including vocational training) and limited opportunities for training once in the job. There are also demographic challenges, such as age, language issues, and literacy or numeracy skills.
- > **Many supervisors and managers** have limited training and understanding of risk management. This is of particular concern where people are working in high risk areas, or jobs which can have a significant impact on the health and safety of others.
- > **Directors and senior leaders** have an increasing focus on health and safety. However, safety governance, particularly in large and complex businesses can be difficult; too often focusing on the wrong areas, without asking the right questions to ensure safety is managed effectively from the board or senior management to the workers on the ground.
- > Advice from **health and safety advisors and other professionals:** is of variable quality, and in some areas there is a shortage of expert advice from health and safety professionals. It can also be difficult for businesses to judge the competency of health and safety advisors because of a lack of sector-wide qualification standards. Businesses do not always seek competent advice externally when needed, or recognise the importance of hiring quality health and safety professionals in-house.

⁶ For more explanation of these principals, see Appendix B.

⁷ The high-level findings were generated through the collection of primary evidence through interviews, and also the examination of secondary evidence.

02/

FINDINGS

IN THIS SECTION:

- 2.1 Reputation and recruitment
- 2.2 Less formal working arrangements
- 2.3 Tight wage pressure
- 2.4 Other factors influencing the workforce
- 2.5 Low quality and availability of training
- 2.6 In-house training
- 2.7 Consistent preferred style reported
- 2.8 Health and safety advisors and health and safety advice
- 2.9 Focus on assessment rather than learning

The findings of this research are in alignment with the findings of the initial scan for the Workforce Development plan referred to above. The research reinforces the areas requiring attention in the plan, and provides insight into a forestry context to support the development of interventions. Of particular concern to employers (here represented by the owners, principals and contractors) and workers was the ability to attract workers into the industry, the availability and quality of training, and the impact of literacy and numeracy issues on health and safety. Additionally, this research found that there is a strong focus on assessment and the attainment of qualifications, rather than a focus on learning and or developing a learning culture in forestry where workers are able to admit mistakes openly and learn from them and to share what they have learnt with their workmates and supervisors. The compliance focus limits the potential for real behavioural change in the sector and suggests that there is a need to move toward developing a learning culture if there is to be a real and enduring impact on health and safety outcomes.

2.1 REPUTATION AND RECRUITMENT

A major concern for principals, owners, contractors and crews was the ageing workforce and the need to recruit new workers to the industry. Participants discussed the bad reputation that they thought forestry had which was driven by high rates of injury and fatalities. Many thought this reputation impacted negatively on their ability to recruit into the sector. There was a strong feeling that this reputation was unfair (particularly when comparing the number of injuries and fatalities in forestry with other industries, such as agriculture and construction) and that these sectors had not been subject to the same level of criticism. Many said that the mothers of sons did not want their sons to go into forestry because it was too dangerous.

I think at the moment, there's not enough young fellas coming into the industry because they've been told, "Oh, it's a dangerous industry" and the parents don't want the kids going in there - I mean it's not, if you do it properly and you think about what you're doing, doing that five-and-five; step back five, and look at it for five minutes, and then work out how to do it, you're fairly right, simple as that you know? It's not hard, so.

Contractor

...you know, because of the way things have gone, particularly in 2013 like you say, and the biggest impact that it is actually having on the industry, especially that year now, is mums just won't let their boys go logging...You're not going logging, you'll get killed...You know, so there's no new guys coming through, it's very, very hard to get teenagers interested in it...Yeah, I mean there's no way I'd let my kids go logging.

Crew member

A number stressed that not only had this led to recruitment problems but that it had impacted on the quality of candidates applying for positions to the point where even government departments were only sending jobseekers that they deemed unemployable in other sectors/roles.

I mean that perception that forestry's the last resort for people and that comes from the government down. You know, we've had WINZ people come into this room and talk about how when individuals, when they deem that they're no good for anything else, then they push them onto forestry courses...so that attitude does stem from the top down. And, you know, that's reflected in our schools and people's perceptions of the industry. We, most forest owners, agree that we'd like to attract a higher calibre of person to the industry but that's pretty hard to do that in an environment from government through to social welfare that if you going into that industry, all you're going to be is a chainsaw operator.

Owner

...we did find that in forestry we were the dumping ground for the dumb kids...It's like "you're too stupid to do anything, let's go to forestry" and we keep telling people this is not a dumping ground, this is a dangerous environment and I guess even if you think about planting trees, the kind of specs that the guys have to work to take a bit of thinking about and they've got say, three metres between rows, two metres between trees and they have to slope correct it, so on a 30 degrees slope, how far apart will it have to be to still get that same distance? And it's at a 10 percent margin and they've gotta do it all by eye and this guy will run out of trees so all his mates have to step up one, they've gotta remember where they were, they've gotta come back into that pattern and they've gotta all work together so communication and constant concentration in keeping it right and if someone's half asleep the whole team screws up.

Contractor

Crew members also concurred with the attitude of government departments towards jobs in the industry. They were of the opinion that some of the training participants on entry-level courses were there as part of the requirements for their jobseeker benefits, rather than out of genuine interest in working in the industry.

*Not only that, but half the people that actually do these courses are pressured into it by WINZ, they don't want the job at the end of it...they're just told, if you want a Benefit because you're being lazy, you have to go and do a course, this course isn't rolling out, you've got three weeks to find a course and sorry, here's the list, but there's only two courses taking, one of them's for beauty therapy and one of them's for logging, you know. And that's what it comes down to, is they don't actually, half of these people that do these courses don't actually want the job at the end of it, and they don't care about the bill because they're only gonna drip feed it for the rest of their lives anyway, they don't give two s****. It's seven and a half grand to do one of the local courses, which is what, six months?*

Crew member

The negative impressions of the forestry industry appeared to have a significant impact on the workforce and triggered a desire on the part of contractors and crews to improve the industry's reputation and to instil professionalism and a sense of pride amongst those working in the sector. Implicitly, this professionalism and pride was assumed by many to be a driver that would shape better health and safety outcomes, as safe and healthy work would be equated with pride in one's work and the professional standing in the sector.

2.2 LESS FORMAL WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Though participants discussed the need for increased professionalism in the industry, the research found a dearth of formal working arrangements. While workers appeared to have contracts, most were minimalistic and were not accompanied by a formal job description. This finding mirrors that of Muir's (2014) research which focussed on forestry working conditions and contractual realities. Workers and contractors said rotating roles were commonplace in the industry, as it provided workers with some diversity of what could be repetitive tasks, and also meant crew members could fill in for others if needed. This was especially important to contractors who ran lean operations and had no floating crew members to cover.

Well, we've got a foreman but then everyone else chops and changes.

Crew member

Job descriptions provide a means to communicate expectations of staff, both in terms of the work they carry out and the standard they are expected to meet when doing so. The lack of job descriptions may reflect the nature of the working environment and the diversity of roles that crew members take; however, this gap is a lost opportunity to reinforce health and safety messaging and expectations from the outset of a crew member's employment.

Continuity of employment was also tenuous for workers working for contractors without long-term contracts. In these instances it was common place to lay off crew members or entire crews when work dried up. For these crew members and their families precarious employment had very real implications for their domestic life, with some stressing their partners had to work because of their employment insecurity, and or were unable to stop working to retrain and in some instances delaying having family was linked to the precarious nature of their paid work. Precarious employment has been associated with poorer health and safety outcomes (Bohle et al., 2008). It seems reasonable to assume that for forestry workers who have no way of controlling their employment security within the industry and who face periods of time without work and pay, there are psychosocial impacts which can shape poorer health and safety outcomes.

As WorkSafe considers how to support workforce development in forestry, it should bear in mind the employment relations practiced in the context of effects on health and safety.

2.3 TIGHT WAGE PRESSURE

Also affecting the workforce in forestry was a significant amount of downward pressure on wages. Many participants reported the presence of downward wage pressure where over a crew member's career there was little increase in the hourly rate. Downward pressure on wages was common for those in the ground-based non-mechanised and silviculture crews. Crew members said that whilst the hourly rate offered could be appealing to school leavers, it was less attractive to workers when they had been in the role for some time, or had begun establishing a family.

*The pay is s***. Simple fact of logging.*

Crew member

The hourly rate was considered low, even when compared to low-skilled work, such as retail and hospitality jobs where the working conditions were considered superior. Working in forestry was demanding and environmental conditions were often challenging, many thought their pay rates did not compensate for the working conditions, risk or skill required to work in logging or silviculture.

You know, like you can actually get more working at McDonald's than you can in forestry, and you travel less, your job - I'm only saying this because my son worked at McDonald's... so he travelled five minutes to work and he was indoors in the warm, you know, everything's wonderful, finishes after his like seven-hour shift or whatever, whereas in the forestry for us, you've gotta travel an hour. You've gotta be up at 5.00 am, and of course it's tiring and it comes with some more, yeah, I think it's an underrated job for the amount of energy and that that the guys put into it, don't you think? You know, it's like, "Oh, you work in the forestry, oh."

Contractor

This low pay meant that there was little incentive for workers to upskill or to stay in the industry as they became more skilled, as they saw no benefit to gaining qualifications or certification.

If your pay's not going up, you're not going to progress anything - why would you stick around?

Crew member

There's no reward for experience. There's none. None whatsoever. No, it doesn't matter how many modules or qualifications you get, that may get you the job, but it won't get you any extra money.

Crew member

2.4 OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING THE WORKFORCE

In addition to the recruitment and employment relations issues affecting the workforce, interviewees raised a number of other matters that were having an impact.

Increased mechanisation of logging operations has led to changes in production practices and altered working conditions and employment opportunities for forestry workers. Specifically, the introduction of chainsaws, mechanisation of off-road transportation and felling has changed the nature of the worksite in large scale forests to that of industrial scale production, involving the reordering of specific tasks through machine capability and providing the potential to dramatically increase production rates.

While mechanisation of felling operations leads to a decrease in the number of workers required for harvest and fewer men on the ground, the intensification of work that mechanised production can generate has psychosocial implications, including greater stress from intensification of job tasks and the associated experience of increased job demand. These are issues to consider when planning future interventions in forestry, as they are likely to be seen in New Zealand, given the focus on mechanisation.

The trend in New Zealand with industrial scale forest owners has been to encourage contractors to move toward being fully mechanised and where ultimately there will be ‘no men on the ground and no hand on the chainsaw’ (Berkett, Visser, & Manley, 2011). However, it remains that while full mechanisation is being realised for some crews operating in industrial scale forests, there are still many crews who are not fully mechanised and who continue to rely on cable based logging on steep sites (53% of forest operators), and harvesting practices that have changed little in the last 50 years (Amishev, 2011 & Harrill, 2014). This means that tree felling and breaking out are still key safety issues in the industry.

Drugs and alcohol were a concern for owners, principals, contractors and workers in the industry. Though the majority of interviewees felt there had been improvements in this area with many employers undertaking pre-employment, post-incident and random drug and alcohol tests, it was still seen as an ongoing issue.

You know, I think (here) I think the industry is getting on top of the drug and alcohol issues, mainly drugs. We do, we're part of a number contractors that have an arrangement where we engage (a testing company) to undertake random drug and alcohol testing and, you know, we have made good progress since that was introduced about eight years ago but the temptation's there and, you know, we're sort of I guess for us the journey we're on is to have it accepted that, you know, there is no place for drugs and alcohol abuse in the industry but from time to time, you know, it can be a challenge for contractors.

Owner

Contractors and crews discussed the unique pastoral care role that contractors took with crew members. It was common for contractors to provide support to their crews in their personal lives, over and above employment issues. This support took the form of providing housing, loans and payment of bail, transport to and from work, and/or life coaching and support.

On the whole, the crews interviewed were tight-knit and had a close relationship with their employer. This relationship resulted in a lot of trust on the part of workers, and it is important for any intervention in forestry to take this into account in its planning.

2.5 LOW QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY OF TRAINING

There were mixed reports of the training available to forestry industry members. However, the strongest theme from this was that training availability and quality was poor and was not meeting the needs of owners, contractors or crews. Some contractors raised the lack of quality trainers available to come out to their sites and provide the right information for their workers, and then assess them so they are a qualified for task. This was partly related to the funding available to trainers, it was viewed as being too low to attract trainers who had the experience and expertise needed.

Dysfunctional, but the big thing is, the guts of it, is how good the people are doing it. Because training, you really want your trainers to be at least as good as your good people, otherwise they come out with no, they've probably got no personal organisation, they're probably useless at, sort of, turning up and doing their stuff properly. But if they haven't even got the skill set or the, sort of, the mana to train, they're of no value to the boys, apart from the low level, you know, starter outer guy, you know, once you're at intermediate level you want a guy with a bit of authority and a bit of knowledge and the training sector doesn't pay enough, I don't know they probably pay \$30,000 or \$40,000, for the guys on the machine make \$80,000 to \$100,000, because of the hours they do.

Contractor

Consistently, owners and contractors in this research said that there was not only a shortage of quality trainers (and assessors) available, but also amongst those providing training the quality was variable. The shortage led to significant delays for new workers requiring training, where some commenced work and had to wait some time before the trainer was available. This had implications for those who required training and assessment to comply with expectations of WorkSafe and to ensure they are proficient and competent to perform particular tasks.

Yes. I believe they're a bit thin on the ground, the last time I spoke to my trainer - and it was a while ago and I think he probably heard that I shut down for a wee bit and he's just been leaving me alone - but last time I spoke to my trainer he had something like 40 crews that he was looking after and each crew has got four or five guys. Admittedly there's probably only a couple in each crew that's probably getting any training at any time, well maybe. And it's one trainer that's trying to run around doing all that, it's, yeah. You don't see them very often.

Contractor

Yes, some of the guys are right into National Certificates and stuff, and that might be up to me, I'm not pushing for it, but there's not enough trainers out there.

Contractor

2.6 IN-HOUSE TRAINING

Though a clear theme of poor training and low availability was apparent, results from the 2015 Health and Safety Attitudes and Behaviour (HSAB) survey showed that there had been a significant increase in workers who said they had received some type of formal training in the last six months (see Table 1). The percentage of workers who had received training in the last six months had increased from 32 percent in 2014 to 42 percent in 2015. This coincided with a significant decrease in the percentage of workers who said they had not received formal training in 3 years or longer (from 16 percent to 11 percent) and a significant decrease in those who said they had never had any formal training (from 17 percent to 9 percent).

TIME SINCE RECEIVING FORMAL TRAINING	2014 %	2015 %
In the last six months	32	42*
6-12 months ago	21	24
13 months - 3 years ago	13	13
More than 3 years ago	16	11*
I've never had formal training	17	9*

Source: HSAB Survey (2014 & 2015)

Table 1: Time since receiving formal training, as reported by workers (2014-2015)

A possible explanation for the disparity between principals, corporate owners and contractors and the workers is that many principals, owners and contractors are employing their own trainers and assessors in order to meet training needs. Most of the larger owners interviewed had, or were in the process of implementing, an internal training structure and staff employed who could do the necessary training and assessing.

It's not easy to get training and assessing at the times that it's needed. There's a little bit of a wait...A shortage of trainers and a wait...But it is happening, not as quickly as we'd like. So our response to that as of the last probably week, two weeks, we've said "okay", we've identified a person within our own contractor base who has the ability to train and assess and we're going to upskill them...We're going to train that person to be a trainer and then we can use them for a considerable number of the assessments, both machine operating and tree falling. Yeah, so we'll have some in-house stability. So that's how we've worked. Yeah, instead of waiting we can get more training done, but it's not just training, it's just follow up assessments of competence just to ensure that, you know, people aren't dropping their standards, taking shortcuts, or they're remembering. Or there's bringing them up to speed with little changes or improvements in best practice. So that in-house capability is something we feel we need to make that step to take control of.

Contractor

* Represents a statistically significant change from 2014 to 2015.

2.7 CONSISTENT PREFERRED STYLE REPORTED

A consistent message across the interviews (owners, principals, contractors and crews) was that literacy and numeracy were issues that impacted on health and safety. Work undertaken by WorkSafe in 2015 also pointed to the need for plain language in communicating with forestry crews, specifically focusing on guidance (Workbase, 2015). While many of the owners and principals discussed having undertaken a Bachelor's degree in forestry or a related discipline, those in contractor or crew roles reported less formal education, with some leaving before completing School Certificate, or NCEA Level 1. When discussing their own or their staff's entry into the industry, most contractors stated that it involved leaving school early (some as early as age 13), and part of the attraction for these workers was that you could earn a living without having to deal with reading and writing, or being in a classroom setting. This has implications for training, and the format and design of the delivery of it.

*But I mean you can't, not everything can be hands on. But we would prefer it hands on training is better for us. Because you know, if I wanted to be in a f**** classroom I would be there now. Either one, all of us would be the same, but at the same time we're open to the paperwork too, but I prefer hands on sort of training instead.*

Crew member

All in the industry wanted to have limited time off the job for training, this included crew members. Some crew members discussed wanting a short period of training in a quieter classroom setting for when they needed to learn theory or background information. Following this, they would prefer practical, on-the-job training, where they could learn through doing the tasks required and receive feedback as they went.

Contractors were also in favour of this type of training, and wanted training, particularly that for those new to the industry, to reflect the work environment that workers would be entering. Many relayed experiences of trying to work with the local polytechnic institutes that have not been a positive experience for them as the courses set the wrong tone for trainees of what to expect.

The waste of time course is three days a week from 9.00 to 3.00, there's no repercussions for not turning up, you're showed lots of videos of big machines and it's always sunny and there's birds tweeting. It's never muddy, it's never cold and tutors with no enthusiasm. So we've had – there's an Academy course running and they ring us up "we've got two people looking for jobs, can you come out to the worksite?" "Yep, bring the course out, come and have a look what it's really like."

They turned up in the van, sat at the top of the hill, the tutor never got out, the foreman was there, he said "all right, we'll go down the hill, you can have a look, talk to the guys that are doing their job", he walked down the hill, by the time he got to the bottom of the hill there was one person still with him so we showed that guy what the work was like, walked back to the top of the hill, the tutor says "so when do these two guys start?" He was told very, very bluntly if they can't get their arse out of the van you can, out of here. "And by the way, you don't come back either," and the guy that walked down the hill, "give me a call".

Contractor

Many thought that polytechnic institutes were losing students, and related this to the approach taken by the institutions. This was seen as contributing to declining roles at the institutions, and subsequently a smaller pool for recruitment, as new staff were not coming through the education system.

They have a rural polytech down in (city name), and it used to be big...well, they had two intakes a year of 10 students each intake and probably, oh, you know, years before I went there they were full, full, full every intake, probably about three or four years after I left they were full, full, full, and then just died right off.

Crew member

The disconnect between what is being provided by polytechnic institutes and what is wanted by industry is an area that WorkSafe's Workforce Development resource should consider in its future interaction and partnering with the forestry industry. A better alignment between training needs and what is supplied is likely to improve the industry engagement and provide better opportunities for workers new to the industry.

2.8 HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVISORS AND HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVICE

Some contractors required training about health and safety systems and how to set up systems so they could comply with the new legislation. They addressed this need by contracting in a health and safety advisor, often at considerable cost and where some thought the quality of advice given was poor.

I've got a health and safety policy and it's a three page duplicate, hazard IDs and near-misses and all that and I tried to give them to (a Principal) and they didn't wanna know about it. I tried to give them to (an owner) before that, he didn't wanna know about it. So I'm sort of - I paid \$2,000 for this health and safety policy and no-one wanted anything.

Contractor

This demonstrates that training is an issue for those who employ workers and supervise their work, they often do not have the time to undertake formal training themselves and cannot do off site training and are vulnerable then to contractors, who in the view of many offer variable and often poor advice.

2.9 FOCUS ON ASSESSMENT RATHER THAN LEARNING

Participants revealed that there is a strong focus on assessment and being documented as qualified for task, 'ticketed', rather than a focus on proficiency or the learning process itself. When training was raised in the interviews and focus groups, discussion quickly moved to assessment.

Yes, it's on site and, yeah, that is all on site and they come up and assess them and they've got their books they have to fill in, and they have to write out their answers, take it home and do your homework. So it's pretty thorough, and so they're all ticketed, everybody's ticketed for the job they doing and getting more stuff all the time.

Contractor

We push for training, we try to do as much training as we can to make sure the guys have the NZQA units for working out there.

Contractor

Contractors in particular were concerned with needing to have themselves and their staff documented as having the right tickets or unit standards. The need to be ticketed was perceived to be driven by owners and WorkSafe's expectations. As a whole most thought that WorkSafe was focussed heavily on people having the right documentation and with respect to training this was being able to demonstrate that workers were 'ticketed'. This focus on qualifications and documentation was not always explained to contractors and led to frustration, particularly for smaller contractors who did not have access to corporate training structures and were reliant on external trainer/assessors who were in short supply.

...he's looking through the training records and he's saying "So where are your training records?" and I said "Well I don't have industry modules." So while I trained most the guys, when I had that company like I didn't do the modules myself because I never thought that I'd actually be sitting in a machine or doing it myself, it's one of those dumb things where I probably should have done it in tandem with the guys but you're busy doing other things.

And so he wrote me out an improvement notice going "so you need to be qualified" and he said "so what do you do?" I said "well I do everything" and so he said "that's gonna be impossible." I said "I've got a bloody Bachelor's Degree, I mean to do these things is a piece of cake." In any case, so I've been doing Level 3 and Level 4 Polytech and stuff which drives me nuts because it's so badly written and so I spend half my time actually writing comments about they need to get their questions right and answer and one of the tutors is actually a guy that we were in business with together so he keeps on saying to me "Don't write a whole paragraph, the answer is yes or no" and that's the problem, these things are written for lowest common denominator.

And so I'm not moduled for task yet but I'm about - there's only about two away and so the guys have been laughing me, I'm saying well you insist or your workforce do it, I mean it's actually been useful for me to go inside and see how dysfunctional this whole training thing is and hopefully can make some changes for results.

Contractor

While assessors can provide inspectors with an objective, and hopefully consistent, view of the level of skill and ability of workers, the current approach is having the adverse effect of pushing for qualification achievement, rather than learning and understanding what is required to undertake tasks well, whilst staying healthy and safe. This is an area for WorkSafe to address going forward.

Yeah, training is my biggest concern because training is about training to do the job safely. Being compliant is fine, we can all be compliant, it is understanding why we are being compliant though.

Contractor

03/

CONCLUSION

This research sought to understand the issues facing the forestry industry in terms of their health and safety workforce development and training. The research has affirmed that the current understanding that WorkSafe has of the issues, mirrors those we interviewed in the forestry industry.

The forestry industry is an ageing workforce, and employers in the industry are struggling to recruit new workers into the industry. Many considered this was also because of the negative reputation the industry had which had been driven by media and government departments who had highlighted the high rate of injuries and fatalities in the sector. Additional recruitment challenges included the perception that Forestry was a 'last resort' for employment and significant downward wage pressure merely confirmed this perception. Employers in the industry spoke of encouraging professionalism in the industry and consciously working to develop pride in being a worker in this industry. Linked to professionalism was the idea that there needed to be a range of career pathways in forestry, such as those that existed with the New Zealand Forest Service in the past.

Employment in this industry is often characterised by less formal working arrangements and often no job descriptions for workers. In addition, precarious employment was common amongst smaller crews. Research evidence suggests that all of the aforementioned can have a negative effect on health and safety outcomes. Many contractors who were keen to attract good workers and retain the workers they had, embraced a pastoral role toward their workers. The workers spoke well of this care shown by their contractor and loyalty was evident. Challenges for those offering pastoral care were drug and alcohol use in the community that their workers were members of and social behaviours that challenged a good work ethic. Increased mechanisation prompted challenges in recruitment, where the young wanted to operate the machines immediately and were reluctant to engage in manual work. Typically, experienced bushmen were the machine operators in mechanised crews, but labour needed on the ground was reduced, however it was still necessary for some aspects of the operation.

The provision of external training in the industry was unreliable, both in terms of quality and accessibility. This was particularly the case with entry-level courses, which were widely perceived as removed from the forestry working environment and where those who secured the qualification were ill equipped to respond to the real demands forest harvesting. Addressing these inadequacies had involved many corporate owners and principals employing their own internal trainer/assessors so that their workers were able to gain the qualifications necessary to carry out the work.

Training on site was the preference of most of the participants in this research. While some crew members were keen for a limited session in a quiet classroom environment, they wanted the majority of their training to be conducted on site, and in a practical format where they learnt by doing. This was also the desired model for training delivery for contractors and owners/principals.

Finally, the research found that there was a focus on documented training attainment rather than a focus on developing a learning culture. Arguably the focus on documented assessment and attainment of qualifications is driven in part by corporate owners and principals and a perception of WorkSafe's requirement that training be documented and available for assessment. Ideally working toward establishing a learning culture in the sector should be a goal if long term positive health and safety outcomes are to be achieved.

APPENDICES

IN THIS SECTION:

Appendix A: Methods

**Appendix B: Strategy guiding
principles**

Appendix B: References

APPENDIX A: METHODS

The research involved a mixed-method approach, using both quantitative survey and claims data and qualitative interview and focus group data. The quantitative data provides us with an observation of what change has occurred over time. The qualitative interviewing and focus groups provide an insight and understanding of the views of those in the sector and their explanations of what has changed and why.

FOCUS GROUPS WITH WORKERS IN SECTOR

Focus groups provided an opportunity to hear from a greater number of participants than interviewing alone. Focus groups also give participants the opportunity to build off each other's observations and to discuss with the interviewer. This allows for a multiplicity of views to be recorded in this interactive setting and therefore also allows insight into when and how views differ in this context.

All focus groups were conducted with crews only, no contractors were present; this was to allow staff to be as open and honest as possible without fear of employment repercussions.

INTERVIEWS WITH FORESTRY OWNERS, PRINCIPALS, CONTRACTORS AND WORKERS IN SECTOR

Interviews with managers and staff provide in-depth information on their experience of working in the Forestry sector over the past two years. Interviews give participants the opportunity to discuss issues they may not be comfortable raising in front of a group. It also provides the chance to delve deeper into specific areas that is not possible in a focus group setting.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR SURVEY (HSAB SURVEY)

This survey is run annually by WorkSafe NZ and involves around 290 employers and 380 employees in the forestry sector. It covers a number of questions about the attitudes and awareness of Health and Safety practices and the actions taken by both employees and employers to ensure a healthy and safe workplace. This provides sector level measures of the changes over duration of the research period.

REVIEW OF EXISTING STUDIES

Where applicable, the research draws on existing studies and research to support conclusions drawn from the current research.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research was conducted according to the ethical principles and associated procedures endorsed in the Association for Social Science Researchers.

Ethical considerations apply to the primary data collection – that is the focus groups and interviews with workers and employers in the sector, and interviews with WorkSafe staff.

WorkSafe staff were made aware prior to participation that though they will not be identified by name, they may be identifiable by their role within the organisation.

Informed consent was obtained from sector workers and employers participating in the focus groups and interviews and they are not identified personally by name or business. All attempts have been made to ensure confidentiality. If data could not be reported in a way that does not identify individuals from the sector, it was not reported.

Survey data is anonymous to WorkSafe and only figures that are statistically significant and do not identify individuals have been reported in the research.

Some of the data collection took place on site at a forest where harvesting work was being undertaken. A specific safety plan was developed for staff involved, in collaboration with a forestry inspector, to ensure that research staff were not placed at undue risk during the process of data collection. Personal protection equipment was supplied.

Those who participate in the employer and worker interviews and focus groups received a participant acknowledgement in the form of a \$30 supermarket voucher. Individuals who participated in both received one voucher. Participants were not made aware of this the voucher prior to participation to ensure there was no external coercion. A reasonable amount of food and drink was provided at the focus groups and interviews. Participants will be provided with a summary of the report findings.

All research data of a confidential nature is locked in a secure cabinet, and electronic data of this nature has been password-protected. Data will be held on site in accordance with the WorkSafe NZ National Records retention policy.

RESPONSIVENESS TO MĀORI

The Forestry industry has an over-representation of Māori employed in the sector, with 34.2 percent of employees in Forestry identifying as Māori in 2013, compared with 11.2 percent of the entire workforce identifying as Māori in the same period. This means this project involved a significant number of Māori workers and employers without any focussed sampling.

Te Ara Tika suggests that in the case of Māori centred research, a research team should consult with Māori Advisors within the Agency about the research approach and the need for Māori input and wider consultation. The research should include Māori fieldwork researchers and should consider Māori project leads and analysis.

At the time of writing, WorkSafe did not currently have Māori advisors. However, the National Manager, Māori was involved in the design of this project. Two members of the research team identify as Māori and will be involved in the fieldwork and analysis.

APPENDIX B: STRATEGY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

When the strategic principles are applied to the high level findings, we can surmise, that workforce health and safety interventions in the context of education and training should address:

TERM	DEFINITION
Awareness	workers at all levels have the right information to make informed decisions about the knowledge, skills and experience relevant to their role. This awareness extends to the training and education offerings in the market.
Availability	Risk relevant training is available and that there are competency quality-assured advisors to meet the range of professional needs around the country.
Accessibility	Training and education offerings are fit-for-purpose and value-for-money. Training should support capability building, recognising cultural diversity, vulnerable workers and literacy and numeracy issues.
Alignment	Education and training providers have a common understanding of the core competencies required for specified risks and roles. H&S training and education is built into the development of students before leaving school. Occupational health is woven into training and education.
Assurance	All education and training programmes are measurable, with an adequate level of quality assurance implemented to help business and workers make informed decisions about the capability and skill that can be achieved through specific training and education.

APPENDIX C: REFERENCES

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