



Forestry

Safety culture

Despite its strong performance, the sector has experienced little change since 2016, with one notable exception – worker involvement in health and safety where it leads all other priority sectors:

88% of employees say they are involved in health and safety decisions, and that there is always open, helpful discussion of risks.

79% of workers feel they make a difference to workplace health and safety.

87% feel encouraged to speak up about anything they think is unsafe.

80% feel everyone at work is always trying to improve safety.

87% will confidently raise a health and safety problem with their employer.

There is room to improve communication. Employees are less inclined than employers to agree they always receive easy-to-understand information from bosses, and that bosses tell them how their views have been considered when making decisions.

Also, employers and employees don't see entirely eye to eye on recognition of safe behaviour. Only two-thirds of workers feel bosses praise or reward those who act safely, compared with four-fifths of employers who feel this happens.

Perceptions of risk

A declining proportion of workers say the risk of injury is higher than in other sectors (down from 85% in 2014 to 70% in 2017), which is broadly in line with actual rates of serious harm in forestry. (They have fallen since 2014, but rose in 2017.) This acknowledgement that forestry is riskier than the average sector doesn't mean workers necessarily think something will happen to them. Almost all workers say they personally feel safe at work, and more than half feel very safe.

Workers report a similar number of serious accidents as those in other sectors (14% in 2017), but their reporting of witnessing a near miss is the highest of any sector (almost half say they narrowly avoided serious injury in 2017).

About half of employees say staff work while sick, injured or overtired, suggesting this risky behaviour is commonplace. However, employers are much less likely to believe this happens: only about a fifth of employers say their staff work when feeling this way.

Safety practices

Only half of workers say machinery and equipment are always fully checked before use, whereas six in 10 employers say this precaution is always taken. There is a similar gap in perceptions about the maintenance of machinery:

58% of employees say machinery is well maintained.

69% of employers say machinery is well maintained.

The increasing mechanisation of the sector makes it vital such checks and maintenance are a routine procedure.

Nearly all employers and employees say they took action after noticing a hazard, although very few discussed it at a safety meeting.

Corporate, non-corporate forests

The size of forests and whether corporate managers run them has a noticeable bearing on safety attitudes and behaviour. Workers in big, corporate-managed forests are:

- more likely to have had recent health and safety training
- more likely to say they received recognition for acting safely
- more likely to feel they had a say in health and safety decisions
- yet more likely to work in ways that were risky.

Safetree

The forestry safety website Safetree is aimed more at employers (so they can disseminate information to employees) but only:

63% of workers have heard of Safetree, and

69% of those workers had been to the website and found it useful.

Those who cite it as a source of advice are more likely to be more strongly involved in health and safety. They are also more likely to say action is taken after incidents (and this applies to employers, too). On the other hand, employees who haven't heard of Safetree are less likely to tell anyone about near misses than employees who have.

Safetree is second only to WorkSafe as a source of information for employers, of whom 86% found it helpful. More than half of employers needing advice reasonably quickly go to the website ahead of WorkSafe.

WorkSafe

Forestry employers are more positive about WorkSafe than employers in other sectors – and their sector is the only one in which more than half of employers agree that WorkSafe is working effectively with business like theirs.

Training

Workers who've received health and safety training in the previous 12 months are more involved in health and safety matters than those who have not, and also more likely to agree that employers and employees work together to ensure everyone is safe at work.