

Forestry sector

Our priority plan for the forestry sector primarily covers forest harvesting in commercial forestry operations. Approximately 15% of WorkSafe’s targeted frontline activities will be in the forestry sector because of the high rate of acute harm and its impact on inequitable outcomes for Māori.

Forestry is a small sub-sector with very high rates of serious acute harm associated with tree felling. The fatality rate is about 20 times higher than the average for all industries. Being hit by a tree or log is the most common cause of fatal accidents. Kaimahi in forestry are often young, Māori, and from rural communities such as Te Tai Tokerau/Northland, Tairāwhiti/Gisborne, and the central North Island.

To reduce this harm, we need the whole sector to plan for and practise safe tree felling. WorkSafe will engage with forest owners, managers and lead contractors and hold them to account for ensuring tree felling is done safely. We will ensure businesses meet their requirements to notify us about commercial forestry

operations. Our workplace assessments will look at safe tree felling practice, focusing on forestry operations where there is higher risk of serious harm. We will be clear about how we enforce if poor practice is identified.

We will continue to work closely with industry leadership groups such as the Forestry Industry Safety Council (FISC) and Forestry Industry Contractors Association (FICA) to complete the refresh of forestry guidance and to share data and insights. We will encourage industry and community-led actions to build leadership and capability and share good practice, including kaupapa Māori approaches such as the Te Kawa a Tāne alliance in Tairāwhiti.

WorkSafe’s priorities

Priorities	Why	Objectives
Reinforce sector-led priorities	Being clear on our role in the system, and doing that well, will support the efforts of sector leaders who are seeking to improve health and safety practices in forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WorkSafe and sector partners have a shared understanding of the highest priority actions and who will lead - Improved trust and confidence in WorkSafe among our sector partners
Foster kaupapa Māori approaches to drive locally led shifts in health and safety practice	Community-led approaches can help shift attitudes and get all participants to work together to improve health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved understanding of health and safety responsibilities - Improved risk management practices - Greater ability for communities and kaimahi to influence health and safety practice on forestry sites
Target interventions to address the most serious risks in forestry	Effectively targeting the actions only we can take will make the best use of our resources to influence better outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased compliance with notification requirements - Businesses make a change after interaction with WorkSafe - Investigations and prosecutions are targeted to maximise their deterrent effect

Top harms

- A worker is hit by a falling object
- A worker is hit or trapped by a moving object
- A vehicle rolls or crashes

Key risk factors

- Insufficient or unclear accountability for health and safety through the contracting chain
- Failure to comply with requirements to notify high-risk work
- Poor work organisation and planning practices, including management of overlapping duties
- Poor hazard identification and risk management practices
- Disconnect between kaimahi culture and site culture

Partner concerns

- Information and insights about what WorkSafe is seeing
- Safety culture and leadership
- Uptake of mechanisation

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What WorkSafe will do:

Priority	Initiative	Initiative description
Reinforce sector-led priorities	Share WorkSafe data and insights with forestry sector leads	Share WorkSafe data and insights with forestry sector lead organisations, including fatalities, notifications patterns, and what our inspectorate sees, so that they can influence change through their channels.
	Complete the refresh of forestry guidance	WorkSafe has commenced and will complete a refresh and consolidation of forestry guidance in collaboration with sector leads. As part of this process, we will seek feedback on the form of the guidance, including consideration of an Approved Code of Practice.
	Give certainty to the sector through a clear and credible enforcement position.	Clarify our enforcement position for the forestry sector, clearly communicate our expectations, including the requirement to notify particularly hazardous work, and follow through with action consistent with our position.
Foster kaupapa Māori approaches to drive locally led shifts in health and safety practice	Regional harm prevention approach in Te Tairāwhiti	Continue to support and learn from the Te Kawa a Tāne initiative in Te Tairāwhiti and explore opportunities to extend this approach to other communities with high rates of forestry harm.
Target interventions to address the most serious risks in forestry	Target management of overlapping duties	Undertake workplace assessments targeting management of overlapping duties on forestry sites where terrain combined with multiple businesses interacting increases risks associated with poor work organisation and practice. Where we find poor practice, take action aligned to the sector enforcement position.
	Target safe tree felling practice	Undertake workplace assessment targeting safe tree felling practice including reasonable consideration of mechanisation. Prioritise response to notifications related to felling of trees. Where we find poor practice, take action aligned to the sector enforcement position.
	Encourage improved worker engagement, participation, and representation practice (WEPR)	Undertake workplace assessments focused on WEPR. Where we find poor practice, take action aligned to the sector enforcement position.

How we will track our progress

During Year 1 we expect to see

- Regular engagement between WorkSafe and forestry sector partners.
- Consultation and publication of refreshed forestry guidance.
- Kōrero on lessons learned from Te Kawa a Tāne.
- Workplace assessments targeted to forestry in line with our planned resource distribution, delivered with a nationally consistent focus on safe tree felling.
- Enforcement and investigations in line with our enforcement position for forestry.

During Year 2 we expect to see

- Two-way information sharing between WorkSafe and forestry sector partners.
- Clearly communicated expectations for forest owners, managers and lead contractors.
- Consistent focus on key risk factors in our workplace assessments, enforcement, and investigations, including overlapping duties.
- Exploration of extending community-led approaches to other regions.