

Growing our safety culture

Fiona Ewing



Fiona Ewing, National Safety Director and Dame Alison Paterson, FISC Independent Chair, talking to contractors in the Lower North Island

Safety Culture Tree tool – improving on-site safety and productivity

People are crucial to the success of any forestry business, including its success at health and safety. With that in mind, the Forest Industry Safety Council (FISC) has been working with the industry on an excellent tool called the *Safety Culture Tree* to help create safe, productive and resilient workplace cultures (see Figure 1).

The tool shines a spotlight on the culture in a workplace and reveals what crews, contractors, forest owners and managers really think about health and safety. These attitudes are important because they drive behaviours and practices at work. The tool also offers a process to get crews working on ways to improve attitudes and practices.

The tool has already been used with success by companies like forest owner/manager Port Blakely and NZ Forestry. Port Blakely CEO, Phil Taylor, says the *Safety Culture Tree* (see Figure 1) is one of several initiatives that have contributed to a steady decline in

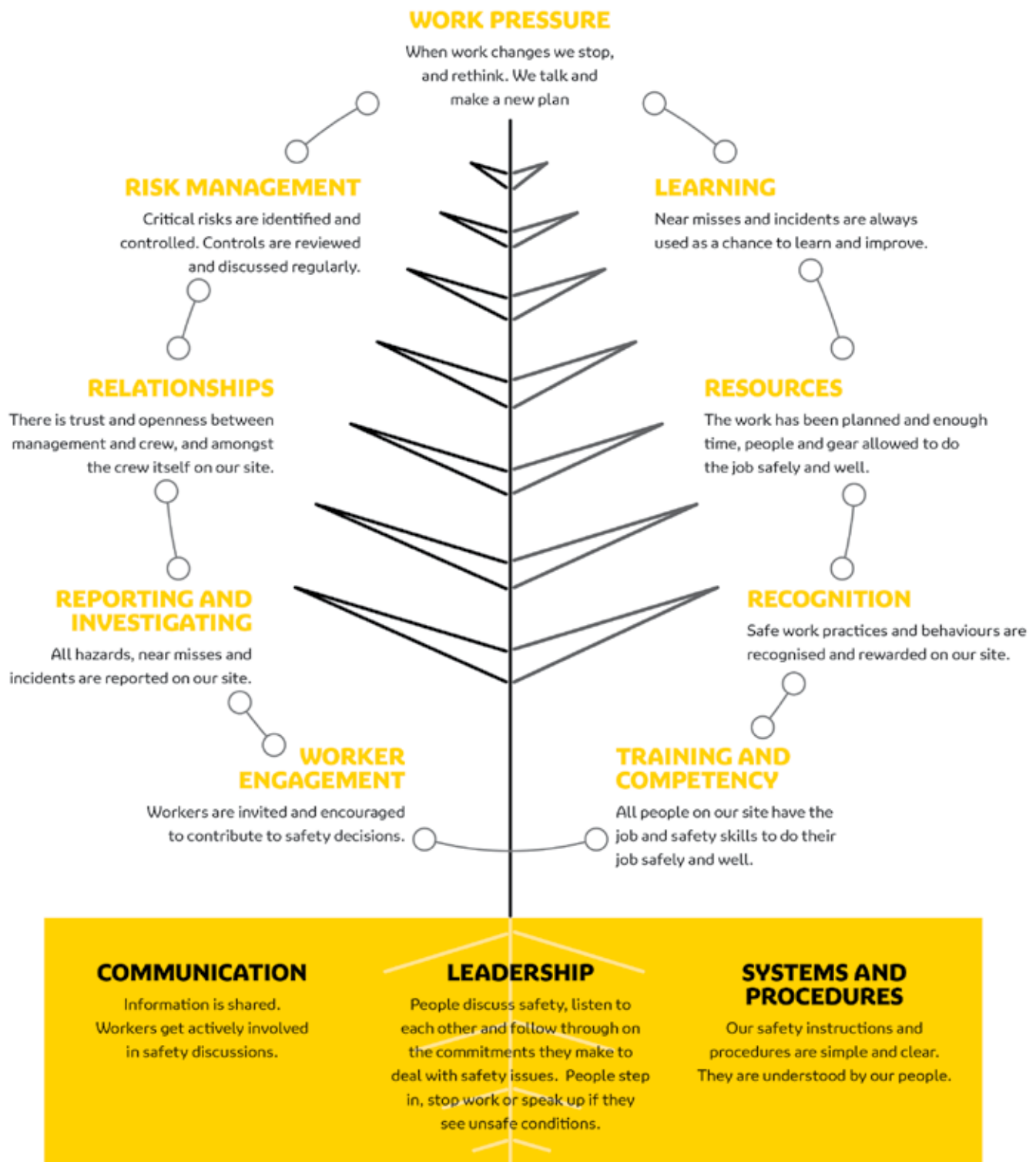
injuries among his company's contracting crews over the last decade. That result is encouraging – and bucks a national trend. Nationally, the decline in injury rates seen across the board since 2013 stalled last year, with severe injuries per 10,000 workers beginning to rise again (see Figure 2).

FISC believes the *Safety Culture Tree* tool has the potential to help forestry companies reverse that upward trend. FISC has been working to update the tool, which was originally developed by the forestry industry and ACC in 2009. Several companies are now piloting the revised tool to ensure it is suitable for all kinds of forestry operations and the updated tool is expected to be launched later this year.

Use by Port Blakely

Last year, FISC published a case study on the www.safetree.nz website on how the tool had helped Port Blakely reduce injury rates and increase productivity (see Figure 3). In the case study, Phil Taylor says the company's injury rates had fallen significantly over

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June 2017

Figure 1: The *Safety Culture Tree*. Source: FISC

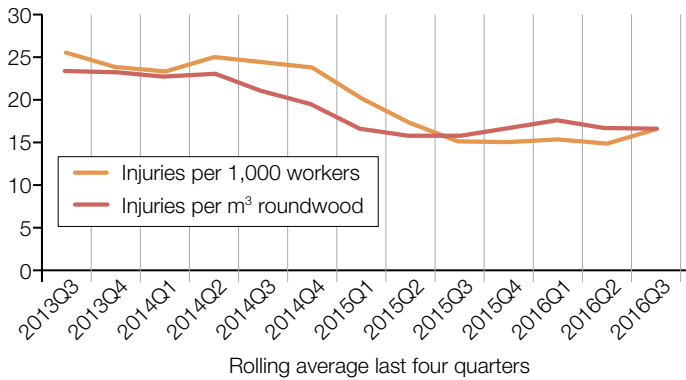


Figure 2: National rates of severe injuries to workers

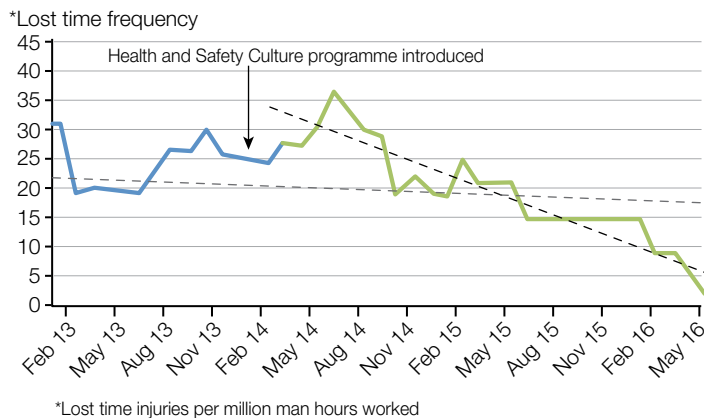


Figure 3: The *Safety Culture Tree* tool has been a factor in Port Blakely's reducing injury rates

the previous decade as it improved health and safety systems, processes and training. But despite these improvements, occasional accidents still happened where people seemed to be so focused on getting the job done that they weren't thinking about working as safely as they could.

Survey results

That led the company to start looking at the safety culture within its crews, i.e. their attitudes and commitment to health and safety and how this affected practices on-site. In 2014, Port Blakely decided to begin using the *Safety Culture Tree*. The *Safety Culture Tree* process started with a survey, where workers rated their crews on 12 areas critical to health and safety. These areas included things like whether people always act in a safe way when no-one is looking or if they were comfortable speaking up when something was unsafe.

The survey involved confidential crew interviews with the forestry facilitators who ran the process. This assisted with any literacy issues and helped ensure individuals could speak frankly. The foreman did the survey too, but he wasn't around when the crew answered it. Aggregated results for the whole crew were sent back to the workers, foreman, crew owner and Port Blakely in the form of a graphical report. The scores in

the report provided a snapshot of each crew's safety culture. Any of the 12 critical safety areas requiring action were flagged red or orange, making it easy to identify what required attention.

Port Blakely did the survey with eight logging crews, five silviculture contractors, three roading and trucking companies, and the Port Blakely team. Phil says that what the survey told him was that while the company already had high-performing crews, contractors and staff, there was room for improvement. The experienced forestry safety facilitators then went through the reports with each crew and help them come up with an action plan to deal with one critical issue highlighted in their report. Once that issue was sorted, the facilitators worked with the crew on the next big issue.

Phil said he was amazed by how many improvements the crews came up with. For example, one crew realised it was short-circuiting its morning tailgate meeting because this was held around the utes out in the elements so it was very uncomfortable.

The workers suggested the boss get a container, which he did, so they now meet in an environment where they can focus on what is being said. That has led to better tailgate meetings and a much safer, more productive, working environment throughout the day.

Another contractor struggled with his paperwork, so he now digitally records all the RT messages given and received about health and safety during the day.

Phil says the safety improvements the crews came up with also boosted planning and efficiency and, as a result, the crews could do more loads a day. In the end, running the *Safety Culture Tree* programme added value, rather than costs, to Port Blakely's bottom line.

FISC encouraged

FISC is very encouraged by the potential of the tool to help other forestry companies improve their workplace culture and performance on health and safety. It offers a way to uncover some of the things that are getting in the way of good health and safety on-site, and a process for engaging crew and company staff in fixing these problems.

Find out more

Watch the video case study or read the full case study at www.safetree.nz. Find out more at enquiries@fisc.org.nz.

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