

# Worker deaths a sad reminder that forestry's safety problems have not gone away

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## Still much work to do

Last year the forestry industry achieved a major milestone, with the Forest Industry Safety Council (FISC) delivering on two key recommendations of the 2014 Independent Forestry Safety Review and preparing to deliver on a third recommendation. However, forestry also had the highest number of fatalities since 2013 when the deaths of 10 workers prompted the Independent Review. Seven forestry workers died last year – a sad reminder that the industry's safety problems have not gone away.

The latest Safetree *How Are We Tracking?* dashboard (Figures 1 and 2) shows some improvement in serious injuries, where a worker needs more than a week off to recover. Although there was a 15.5% rise in injuries per 1,000 workers in the year ended June 2017 (the most recent injury rate data available), there was a 6.5% decrease in injuries per 1,000 m<sup>3</sup> of roundwood production over the same period. However, the deaths of seven workers last year is totally unacceptable.

There is still a lot of work to be done to make forestry a safe, sustainable and professional industry. This work includes ensuring that everyone in the industry supports and makes use of FISC's three key harm reduction initiatives set out below.

## Safetree Contractor Certification scheme

Significant work has been done by forestry companies, on their own and in partnership with FISC, to improve safety. One key initiative developed in partnership with the industry is the Safetree Contractor Certification scheme.

This industry-wide contractor certification scheme was a key recommendation of the Independent Review. Certification sets a benchmark that contractors' health and safety systems can be assessed against and helps them improve their performance. It also provides forest owners and managers with an assurance that the contractors they hire are competent for the job.

The scheme was launched in October 2017 and the first contractor was certified in March, with another 205 part-way through the certification process.

## Safetree Professional Forest Worker Certification scheme

The contractor certification scheme follows the launch in 2016 of a certification scheme for workers, another recommendation of the Independent Review. By December 2017, 130 workers had been awarded Safetree Professional Forest Worker Certification. This involves

an on-the-job assessment of the competency of workers who do two high-risk tasks: tree felling and breaking out. Certification confirms that the worker's skills are up-to-date and that they are able to work safely and professionally.

A key focus for FISC in 2018 will be promoting the contractor and worker certification schemes to ensure they achieve a high uptake. Both these initiatives were developed with heavy input from the industry, but they will only achieve their full potential if they are adopted and used right across the industry. The schemes are 'user-pays', so it is essential that contractors value this investment in health and safety and that forest owners and managers recognise contractors who make this investment.

As part of our work to embed these schemes we will establish an industry-led Certification Panel to govern and oversee them. We will also form partnerships with third party providers who will deliver them on behalf of FISC.

## Growing our Safety Culture programme

During 2017, FISC also developed and ran a pilot to test its Growing our Safety Culture programme. This initiative was developed in response to another recommendation of the Independent Review, to ensure workers have genuine involvement in improving health and safety.

The programme aims to give workers a voice in health and safety, and helps forestry businesses find out what is really going on in their teams. It involves a culture survey that identifies strengths and weakness, then a facilitated session where teams can work on ways of improving health and safety.

Last year the programme was piloted by nine forestry companies covering 31 crews and seven groups of employees – 364 workers in total. The response to the pilot was very positive, with one participant now rolling the programme out across its entire business, including the board. Trained facilitators are now in place to help run the programme, which was officially launched in March 2018.

## Collaboration needed

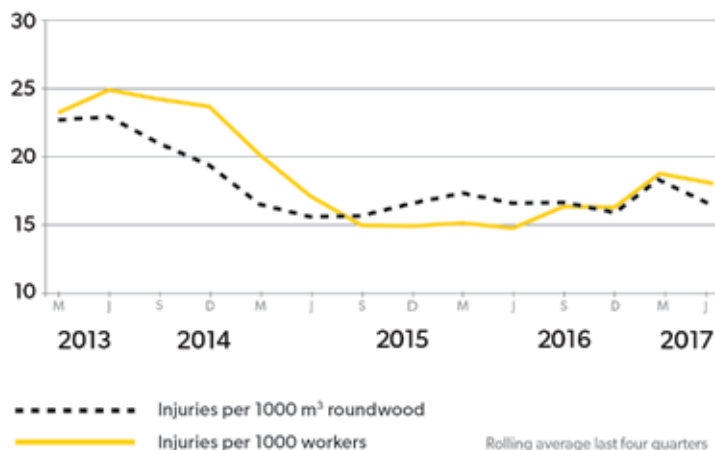
The launch of these three initiatives is a significant achievement, but much of what FISC has achieved to date has been done in collaboration with the large-scale owners who together control about 70% of the wood production from plantation forests. FISC has had less interaction with the more than 14,000 forest owners who control the remaining production. Developing links with these small woodlot owners, particularly by working with the NZ Farm Forestry Association, will also be a focus for FISC in 2018.

# HOW ARE WE TRACKING?

## RESULTS TO END JUNE 2017

### INJURIES TO WORKERS

#### RATE OF INJURIES RESULTING IN MORE THAN A WEEK OFF WORK



### TRENDS & ACTUAL INJURIES

#### INJURIES RESULTING IN MORE THAN A WEEK OFF WORK

**30** Injured In  
June quarter  
**125** Injured In  
June year

#### TRENDS – CHANGE SINCE LAST QUARTER

↓ **3.6%**  
drop in injuries  
per 1000 workers

↓ **6.9%**  
drop per 1000m³  
roundwood production

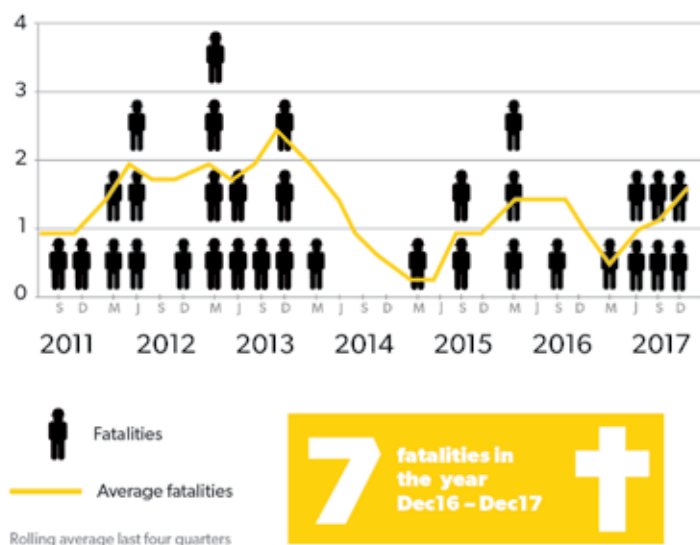
#### TREND – CHANGE SINCE LAST YEAR

↑ **15.5%**  
rise in injuries per  
1000 workers

↓ **6.5%**  
drop per 1000m³  
roundwood production

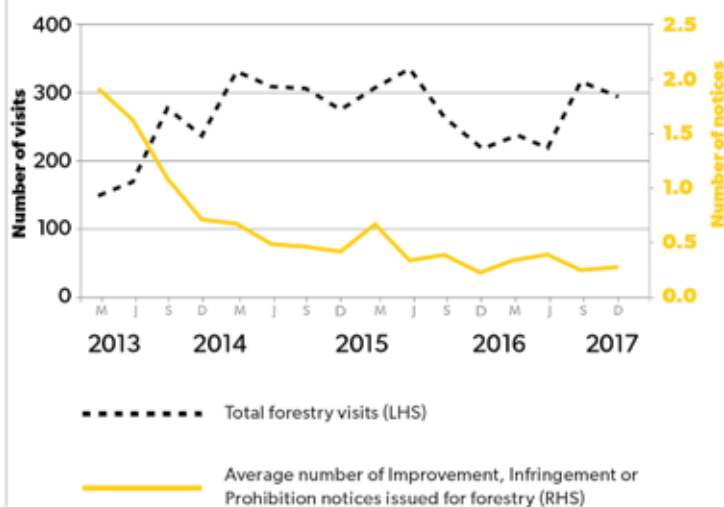
## RESULTS TO END DECEMBER 2017

### FATALITIES



### OUTCOME OF WORKSAFE ACTIVITIES

#### FORESTRY VISITS AND NOTICES



**Source:** WorkSafe/MPI/FISC. **Injury** data in this dashboard is based on ACC claims where someone receives a period of weekly compensation within a quarter. This data lags by 6 months due to claim processing time.

Figure 1: Safetree *How are we tracking?* Dashboard

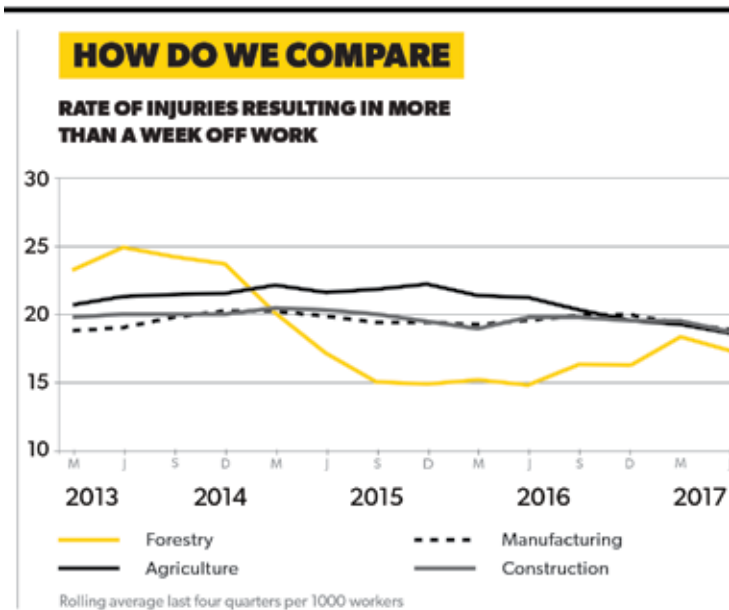
We will work in a number of ways to improve engagement and reach. This includes holding workshops around the country to tell people about FISC's initiatives and to get their feedback on what else we should be doing. We will also work with the industry to raise the profile of the Safetree website and Facebook page, which have health and safety information tailored for forestry.

We have talked to several groups about how we can improve worker involvement and representation,

including with iwi and the Council of Trade Unions. We really value this input and will continue to listen to views and suggestions on ways to enhance worker involvement in health and safety.

### Improving management of risks

To improve management of risks, we will engage with the industry to share lessons about how to best manage

HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE OF THE  
NZ PLANTATION FORESTRY INDUSTRY DECEMBER 2017Figure 2: Safetree *How are we tracking?* Dashboard

risks created by mechanical harvesting, as well as health and safety issues created by work pressures. We will also share lessons from our Learning Review project, which aims to improve the way investigations are conducted so more can be learnt about how to prevent future incidents.

In addition, we will develop resources to help the industry learn from 'successful work' as well as incidents. These resources will help forestry companies build high-performing businesses that are safe, sustainable and professional.

**Silviculture Action Group**

Finally, when assessing emerging risks for which the industry must be prepared, the Government's signalled intention to double the annual planting rate over the next decade cannot be ignored. This will bring new entrants into the workforce, underlining FISC's responsibility to support the new Silviculture Action Group.

The goal of this Action Group is to produce a financially viable, sustainable, compliant and professional silviculture contracting workforce. Among other things, it will look at whether operating practices (some of them developed 20–30 years ago) need to be re-evaluated in light of modern health and safety rules and thinking.

**Zero fatalities and serious injuries goal**

FISC and the industry achieved some important milestones in 2017. However, our injury statistics tell us there is still much work to do to achieve our goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries. To achieve that goal we need everyone in forestry to support and make use of the harm reduction initiatives FISC has developed with, and on behalf of, the industry.

**About FISC**

The Forest Industry Safety Council (FISC) is leading efforts to improve health and safety in forestry. FISC involves representatives of forest owners, forest managers, contractors, farm foresters, ACC, WorkSafe, unions and workers.

Our goal is to create a safe, sustainable and professional forestry sector, with zero fatalities and serious injuries. To achieve our goal FISC focuses on four key areas:

- Contractor and worker certification
- Growing our safety culture
- Improving risk management
- Improving leadership.

FISC's creation was a recommendation of the 2014 Independent Forestry Safety Review. Our work plan is based on the recommendations made by the Independent Review.

In addition to running workshops and hui, our [www.safetree.nz](http://www.safetree.nz) website and Safetree NZ Facebook page provide 'one-stop shops' for health and safety resources specific to forestry.

FISC's initiatives and resources are developed with significant input from people working in forestry. This is to ensure they are practical and meet the needs of the New Zealand industry. More than 73 people from forestry are involved in our working groups, while another 442 companies and individuals were involved in testing initiatives and resources during 2017.

See more at [www.fisc.org.nz](http://www.fisc.org.nz), [www.safetree.nz](http://www.safetree.nz) or contact [info@safetree.nz](mailto:info@safetree.nz).

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