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# Safety in the forest – a new Forest Owners' Association initiative

In 1992, forestry suffered a spate of fatal accidents. Responding to that, the New Zealand Forest Owners' Association decided to develop an overall safety and training strategy for the industry. The plan, developed by the education training and safety committee, was adopted by the Association and has been recommended to all members for implementation. The main goals of the plan include:

- achieving zero fatalities in forestry;
- reducing accidents to less than 20 per million work hours by 1998.

Accident levels at present are 50 per million work hours for logging and 30 for silviculture.

The first objective is to ensure that by 1996 all those working in the forests either hold skill certificates or are engaged in a training programme. At present, some 6000 people work in the industry. Of

those, about 2500 hold FIRS (Forest Industry Record of Skills) certificates, issued by the Logging and Forest Industry Training Board (LFITB).

Mike Newbold, General Manager of LFITB, says that the drive to improve safety and provide skills certification has been very well received by the industry – and not just by employers. "We have been staggered by the response," he says. Since December, LFITB have received 300 applications for training modules.

FIRS certification leads to National Forestry Certification, officially recognised by the New Zealand Qualifications Board. Mike Newbold believes this acts as an incentive for individuals to obtain skills certificates. There is another incentive: in the near future, those without relevant FIRS modules may well find it difficult to find work in the forests.

On the silviculture side of the industry, 11 specific FIRS modules lead to a National Certificate; in harvesting there are 13. All training can be carried out 'on the job' with no disruption to the normal workday. Employers appoint 'trainers'

from the workforce or do the training themselves. Trainers use LFITB's resource materials and can attend special courses. A national network of 68 LFITB-approved assessors provide final certification. Because all training is practical and skill-based, workers need not be literate to obtain skills certification.

## Commercial Benefits

Training is not a legal requirement in New Zealand's forest industry, but there is growing awareness of its commercial benefits amongst employers. More than 600 contractors now make up the bulk of 'employers' in the industry. Each employer can opt to become affiliated to LFITB, for which they pay a fee ranging from \$50 per year for individuals to a maximum of \$250 for those with more than 20 employees. The fee covers supply of all training materials, assessments and final skill certification. – reprinted from NZ Forestry Bulletin (NZFOA Magazine)

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## Forestry Accord endorsed

The Forestry Accord – a 1991 agreement between forest owners and conservation groups concerned with the protection and preservation of New Zealand forests – has been fully endorsed at its second official review.

The conservation director of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Kevin Smith, says the agreement has worked well and will play an even greater role in the future.

"It will become more influential in forestry-related issues, with regular meetings scheduled among the signatory parties. It's important that there is commitment to work cooperatively and use the Accord framework to resolve issues."

His views are echoed by the Maruia Society's Peter Farley. "The Accord has worked well for our group. Though it still has some problems – for example it does not embrace all of those associated with forestry – it has been effective since its implementation."

Kevin Smith says he is impressed with the forestry industry's commitment to the Accord, and was pleased by its use in establishing a proposal to resolve the East Coast Forestry Project. – reprinted from NZ Forestry Bulletin (NZFOA Magazine).

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## Successful year for Timberlands West Coast

A net profit after tax of \$5.241 million and an increase in shareholders' funds to \$119.740 million for the year ended March 31, 1994 has been announced by the State Owned Enterprise Timberlands West Coast Limited.

The profit is similar to last year's result of \$5.450 million. Chairman Mr Rex Loach said the profits, as agreed by the shareholders, will be retained to reinvest into fully developing the forest estate. The profit was maintained against the background of moving from conventional harvesting methods to helicopter logging.

Timberlands manages 127,030 hectares of indigenous production forest under contract with the Crown and owns 24,000 hectares of exotic forest. Current development resulted in 603 hectares of planting and 2212 hectares of silvicultural treatment. Log production totalled 196,674 cubic metres. *Pinus radiata* production is projected to increase to 150,000 in 1995, as the indigenous resource pro-

gresses to sustained yield harvesting.

A full assessment of the forest estate was completed, the first since it was acquired three years ago. The new revaluation reflects an improved silviculture regime since its incorporation, and the steady increase in domestic and export log prices.

## A Landmark

First production from two sustainably managed South Westland rimu forests began during the year. Chief Executive David Hilliard said "this operation is a landmark in the management of indigenous forests within New Zealand and has already received international acclaim and support".

"Timberlands is optimistic about the future, with its exotic resource maturing and developing, and complemented by unique, sustainable management of the indigenous forests," said Mr Loach.