

Farm foresters and small-scale forest owners Contractor checklist

When it's time to tend or harvest your woodlot, it's far safer to hire a competent forestry contractor to do the work. You may even decide to pay for a forestry management consultant to provide advice and manage the work.

To do the forestry work yourself for any project that's part of a business you need to be professionally qualified to use all the necessary machinery.

Here are some things to think about when hiring and working with a contractor.

When hiring

- ▶ **Is the contractor competent and reputable?** Ask the contractor about jobs they have done around your area. Check with those customers to see how the job panned out. Is the contractor a member of an industry association? The Forest Industry Contractors Association (FICA) supports safe operations by providing practical workshops, regional networks, information on industry developments and field visits. Membership is voluntary, but it should give you some peace of mind that they have access to such resources and are backed up by their industry body.
 - ▶ **Has the contractor ever received a Safety Infringement Notice?** Ask if they have had any notices issued by WorkSafe and if so what did they do about them. Notices are used to highlight and fix unsafe work practices.
 - ▶ **Is their crew trained and qualified?** Forestry work is skilled work, and all forestry workers should have completed qualifications to do their tasks.
 - ▶ **Do they have the right plant and equipment for the job?** Some jobs are bigger than others and require specialised or heavier equipment. Check your contractor has what they need to do your job properly and safely.
 - ▶ **Do they have safety management systems in place?** These are things such as holding daily tailgate meetings, having safe systems of work to identify and manage workplace risks, and processes to handle upset conditions (changes that can affect the safety of the work being done). For example, changes in the weather, broken machinery or absent crew.
 - ▶ **Do they have the necessary insurance?** Is the contractor insured to cover your losses if a fire or other damage is caused by their operations?
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When planning for the job

- ▶ **Share information:** Under the **Health and Safety at Work Act 2015** (HSWA) you are a **PCBU** – a person conducting a business or undertaking. That means you have a duty of care and must work with the contractor to ensure safe operations. While they are generally responsible for their workers' safety, you are responsible for telling them about any risks you know of at or adjoining the work site, or while accessing it. This should be done during the planning process. Don't forget to discuss any risks your farming operations create.
- ▶ **Manage the risk:** Work with the contractor to decide what key risks to manage, and what reasonably practicable controls to use.
- ▶ **Ensure safe access to and from the site:** Make sure the track to get to the woodlot can handle the traffic, including heavy machinery. There must also be enough space at the site for the machinery and crew to operate safely.
- ▶ **Have an emergency plan:** Agree what happens if there's an emergency (e.g. an accident or fire requiring emergency services).
- ▶ **Sort out communication:** You and your contractor need to keep talking as the job progresses. Decide how you're going to do this and how often.
- ▶ **Incident reporting:** WorkSafe requires certain injuries, illness and incidents to be reported. Agree how the contractor will report accidents or near hits – to you and to WorkSafe.
- ▶ **Notify WorkSafe:** Tree felling is notifiable work. This means you or the contractor must tell WorkSafe at least 24 hours before felling begins.

While the job is underway

- ▶ **Inform your farm workers:** Tell your employees and family about the harvesting and what risks they need to be aware of.
- ▶ **Talk to the contractor regularly:** The new law means you need to keep an eye on the work the contractor is doing, also ensuring they are following all agreed safety procedures. This is called "due diligence". Even if you engage someone who understands forestry operations to do this for you, your duty of care remains.

DIY: If you decide to tend or harvest the woodlot yourself, you may need information and guidance. Read the Forestry **Approved Code of Practice** and see other resources on www.safetree.nz.

For more: See the Farm Forestry Association New Zealand's **Small Scale Forestry Safety Guidelines** on www.nzffa.org.nz, or the **WorkSafe NZ factsheet for farm foresters** on the forestry section at www.worksafe.govt.nz.

Finding a consultant: The **New Zealand Institute of Forestry** (www.nzif.org.nz) has a list of registered forestry consultants.

Contractor register: **Safetree register of Certified Contractors** www.safetree.nz/contractor-register
