

Fatality Alert: Preliminary information

Post this alert in containers & discuss at safety/tailgate meetings.

Date: February 2024

WorkSafe issued notification of a fatality in the Wairoa area on 8 February 2024. This involved a manual tree-faller. The tree-faller was an experienced worker who was returning to forestry after an absence. He was a recent recruit and had just joined the crew. The WorkSafe investigation is in place.

Our thoughts go out to the family and others involved in this tragic event. This incident is still under investigation and details are still to be determined, so contributing factors to the incident are not available.

Consider these points for safe manual tree-felling.

The Tree Felling Best Practice Guide: This promotes the importance of **on-going competency checks** for all workers through audits, safe behavioural observations or Certification. These demonstrate that workers in high-risk jobs are maintaining the standards required to achieve their original qualifications. All of these checks must be documented.

The Approved Code of Practice for Safety & Health in Forest Operations: This requires a competent person to supervise workers who are new to the operation or task. Regardless of their training status, new workers should not be allowed to work unsupervised until they've demonstrated that they're unlikely to harm themselves or others. Records of supervision and training must be kept, as well as evidence that a competency check has been done.

Follow the 5-Step Felling Procedure

Assess for hazards

1. **Site:** Predominant lean, wind strength, infrastructure, other operations
2. **Tree:** defects, heavy lean, overhead hazards, restrictions.

Ready to cut?

3. **Prepare:** Clear around tree, identify and clear escape route
4. **Cut right:** Use the correct cuts in the correct order
5. **Retreat:** Finish on the safe side, use escape route, watch out for hazards.

Supporting resources

- **See the Tree felling BPG:** <https://www.safetree.nz/resources/tree-felling-bpg>
- **See the ACoP:** <https://www.safetree.nz/resources/approved-code-of-practice-for-safety-and-health-in-forestry-operations>