

April 2018

Forestry safety

What is the issue?

Over the summer WorkSafe New Zealand has noted an increase in notifications of serious incidents where forestry machinery has lost stability on slopes causing serious injuries and fatalities.

What is occurring?

WorkSafe is investigating several very serious incidents involving machinery roll-over or loss of traction or control. We are working to understand what specific and general issues are contributing to these incidents.



Comment

The use of machinery in forestry operations is on the rise as owners, managers and contractors look to move people off the hill or into protected structures to reduce risk in some critical areas of operations. WorkSafe welcomes this change.

However, risks are likely to increase as ground conditions worsen into the winter.

Where we identify practices or circumstances that are not covered by existing advice or knowledge we will advise the industry. We will also meet with the industry to review machine stability risk management practices and identify additional measures.

Duties

All forestry operators have a duty to effectively manage risks to workers. Loss of machine stability is a critical risk.

- Work must be planned. Forest managers, contractors and workers must work together when planning work.
- Mobile plant must be suitable for the task and in a safe condition for use.
- Tree extraction tracks must be maintained and in a safe condition for use.
- Workers must be adequately trained and competent for the task or under training and close supervision.
- Work must be supervised and monitored.
- Changing conditions must be effectively managed.
- Emergency rescue plans and procedures for extracting injured workers from inside machinery must be effective.

Managing these risks must involve more than just relying on a machine operator's training and minute by minute judgements and decisions.

Further information

Safetree.nz provides guidance and resources for understanding risk management and crew culture, planning, monitoring and competency checks.