

Injury to forestry workers

Dr Ruth Houghton, Director of the Public Policy Centre, University of Otago, is leading a consultancy group that is preparing for the Accident Compensation Corporation a profile of the forest industry, to assist the ACC with its study of safety.

According to her:

Forestry has been shown worldwide to present a high risk of injury and death. Loggers, for example, often work in less than ideal conditions, use equipment and carry out tasks that can cause death or serious injury.

In New Zealand, a recent study of work-related fatal injuries identified forestry workers as a group deserving further attention due to the high rate and number of work-related fatalities. In the 10-year period 1975-1984, 68 fatalities to forestry workers were identified amongst males, giving an estimated rate of 8.0 per 1000 per year (an estimated 40 year risk of death of 1 in 30). The greatest number (50) and the highest rate

(225 per 100,000 per year) occurred amongst bushmen. This is equivalent to an average risk of death of 1 in 12 over a 40-year period. This rate appears to have changed little in 30 years.

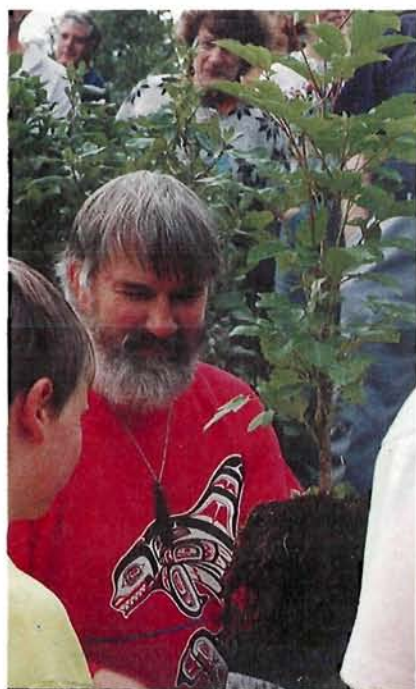
A conservative estimate of the rate of hospitalisation in 1984 of individuals who appeared to have been injured through forestry work is 2 per 100 workers per year. In both 1982 and 1983, there were over 1300 successful claims to the ACC for work-related injury amongst forestry workers—an estimated rate of 14 per 100 workers per year. For the most recent year, 816 forestry workers were found on the ACC compensation claims file.

The major causes of acute injury were due to being struck by a falling, and

occasionally rolling, tree, branch or log, and wounds caused by chainsaws. Most of the injuries were fractures, head injuries or were open wounds (including traumatic amputations).

There is evidence to suggest that safety programmes work if resources are made available. For example, the Accident Reporting Scheme, developed and administered by LIRA, indicates that the incidence of chainsaw cuts to the leg has decreased from 23% of all reported incidents in 1983 to 4% in the first half of 1986. This reduction is coincident with the introduction and increased usage of protective leg gear in the industry. However, despite this success, there are still a large number of injuries occurring in the industry.

Thanks, Don



Dr Don Mead has retired as Editor of New Zealand Forestry after four years in this position. He continues his link with the journal, however, as a member of the Editorial Board.

MARKET REPORT

The following notes have been extracted from the Ministry of Forestry's June 1990 Market Report.

Highlights

The Australian market for sawn timber has been poor. The domestic market for timber has shown a slight improvement in rural areas.

Global markets for pulp and paper are undergoing a cyclical downturn. Log exports remain at a high level.

Conservation constraints are likely to result in a downward revision of worldwide projections of future wood supply.

Port users consider last year's port reforms a success. Loading times have been reduced and all four container terminals have lowered their charges.

The New Zealand Forestry Corporation has withdrawn 231,000 hectares of State forest from the public tendering process for cutting and management rights. It is intended that forestry rights to these forests will be sold separately.

Bids for the forestry rights to forests that are being sold by public tender were called in July 4.

Carter Holt Harvey (CHH) achieved an after tax profit of \$191 million for the year ended March 1990—an increase of 41% compared with the previous year. A significant increase in domestic earnings contributed to the higher profit.

General situation

The Australian market for sawn timber has not improved since their elections.

Poor weather has contributed to the low level of demand. The domestic market for timber has shown some signs of rejuvenation in rural areas as a result of greater purchasing by the farming sector.

In the year ended March 1990 the total number of new dwelling permits issued in New Zealand was 22,851—16.7% increase compared with the previous year. The value of new dwelling permits issued in the year ended March 1990 was \$2057.7 million—an increase of 28% compared with the previous year.

The Institute of Economic Research predictions issued in March 1990 forecast a slowdown in international growth in 1990 which will limit the potential for New Zealand export expansion. Despite this, export growth is expected over the next two years, due to improvements in industry competitiveness.

Global markets for pulp and paper are undergoing a cyclical downturn. This is reflected in New Zealand export price levels for wood pulps. In the March 1990 quarter these were 8.0% lower than in the March 1989 quarter. Pulp prices have fallen to levels prevailing in mid-1988.

Log exports through the port of Tauranga totalled 532,000 m³ in the March 1990 quarter—a 46% increase in volume compared with the corresponding quarter in the previous year. In the year ended March 1990 Tauranga handled 73% of New Zealand's log exports.