



Forest Industry Contractors Association

John Stulen

Chief Executive

john.stulen@fica.org.nz

Tel: 07 9211382

Mob: 027 275 8011

PO Box 6160

Rotorua 3043

Media Release

6 October 2011

For Immediate Release

Diverse Image of Forestry Workforce may Surprise Many

With the end of the school year looming, and a new batch of young people now seriously considering their future career options there is a need to set straight a few myths about the forest industry as a place to work.

The new look of the forestry workforce may be a surprise to many who aren't in the industry. Forestry is now high-tech, much safer, more drug-free and women play an increasingly important role in the industry.

John Stulen, Chief Executive of the Forest Industry Contractors Association (FICA) says, "Forestry is an option for young people who want a high-tech and well paid career. Forestry machines are highly technical."

"There is a great deal of science and bio-technology that goes into developing seedlings for modern forests," Mr Stulen continues, "We need tertiary qualified people to ensure the best financial results for forestry investments. Bright people in forestry progress quickly and are valued for their contributions."

Previously, forestry has had a reputation of being a dangerous industry; however forestry companies have improved their safety records massively over the past decade.

FICA President Jacob Kajavala says, "In the old days, my Father would describe forestry as the "Three D's" - dirty, difficult & dangerous. But now forestry is none of these things. The forest industry now leads primary industry in safety standards and results."

"Huge advances in automation of forestry processes have gone a long way to improve working conditions, but it is the fundamental shift in professionalism & safety culture that has made the real difference. Forestry has transformed itself into a benchmark for other primary industries," Mr Kajavala continues.

Drug testing is now the norm in forestry, this means that drug-users are not welcome in forestry crews and companies.

Mr Kajavala says, “A decade ago, the influence of drugs in the forestry workplace was often placed into the “too hard” basket. But the industry has now adopted a very hard line to drug affected personnel. “Zero drugs” is the standard.”

Mr Kajavala continues, “This standard is monitored using range of testing including pre-employment, post incident, reasonable cause & random testing. Once detected, drug affected personnel are placed into an employee assistance programme. Should the employee address their drug issues, everybody wins. Should the employee fail to make the necessary changes, they leave the industry.”

The role of women in the forest industry is also now more significant. Women and men work alongside each other in small teams where there is great pride in their daily crew achievements.

Mr Stulen says, “The large majority of women in forestry play very significant roles such as technical specialists, forest harvesting supervisors, business owners and CEOs.”

--ENDS--

About Forest Industry Contractors Association (FICA)

FICA’s role is to improve profitability of forest contractors and their clients. This is achieved through professional development programmes including regional seminars, workshops and networking meetings around key forest product regions of the country.

Column Opportunity

FICA CEO, Mr John Stulen writes a monthly column on topics of interest to the forest industry. Please contact FICA if you believe a forestry column could be of interest to your readership.