

Overview of changes made in the Safe Practice for Forestry and Harvesting Operations Approved Code of Practice 2025

General changes

1. New name.

The new Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) is called *Safe Practice for Forestry and Harvesting Operations*. From now on, when people refer to the 'Forestry ACOP' it will be in reference to this document.

2. WorkSafe's forestry guidance has been consolidated.

- The new ACOP replaces the two previous ACOPs (*Safety and Health in Forest Operations 2012* and *Roles and Responsibilities of Principals and Contractors 2014*) which will be revoked and removed from the WorkSafe website.
- The 2012 ACOP will no longer have any legal status and should not be used.
- The '*Health and safety when managing a small forest harvest*' Good Practice Guide (GPG) has been updated and will be published at the same time as the new ACOP.
- All forestry Technical Bulletins have been incorporated into the new ACOP and will be removed from the WorkSafe site.

3. The language.

- Under the old HSE legislation, the 2012 ACOP read as a set of rules where almost every clause contained 'shall' which meant that the instruction was mandatory.
- The new ACOP is written to reflect the current legislation, in particular the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) and the associated General Risk and Workplace Management Regulations. We use the word 'must' only when a practice is required by law. It is clearly marked in the ACOP where 'must' is used.
- We use the terms 'make sure', 'do not', 'check' or similar wording to indicate how WorkSafe expects certain practices to be managed. It is not mandatory to follow these expectations, however, if the business adopts other practices, then they have to be as good, if not better, at providing a level of health and safety.
- The ACOP has been written in plain language to make sure that it is easy to follow and understand.

4. Ease of use.

- The new ACOP is structured very differently than the 2012 ACOP. The new ACOP has been structured to broadly follow the forest operations process, from establishment through to harvest and transportation of logs to the forest gate.
- It has been split into sections, to make it easier for businesses and workers to find the information they need. These parts will be separately downloadable on the WorkSafe website. The parts and individual sections cover the activities in much more detail than the old ACOP.

5. What's been added, and what's been removed

- There is now a significant section on work-related health.
- There is a new section on establishment and silviculture.
- There is a new section on winch-assisted harvesting.
- The section on controlled fires and burn offs has been removed – this was considered to be an area best managed by FENZ.
- There is no section on helicopter logging.

Summary of technical changes

Following is an outline of the new ACOP, with areas of note or change from the previous ACOP. Many of them are small details. They are included for information rather than as an area of focus.

Note: There is nothing in the new ACOP that should materially affect how a well-run and safety-conscious forestry operation currently carries out its business.

Section	Points to note
Part A: Managing health and safety through the contracting chain	This covers the important points of HSWA, managing overlapping duties, the expectations of principals and contractors. The information on HSWA is all new. The information on the contracting chain and overlapping duties is new. The information on the expectations of principals and contractors was previously covered in the earlier ACOP.
Part A: Managing work-related health	This section covers all aspects of work-related health including fatigue, noise, working at extreme temperatures, mental health and vibration. They include examples of possible control measures. This section is new to the ACOP. In the old ACOP, health was covered in three paragraphs.
Part B: General requirements	This section includes guidance on general information such as general workplace requirements and facilities, first aid, emergency plans, PPE, training and supervision, communications and alcohol and drugs. Note – examples of different types of toilet facilities are included. Note – toilets should be reasonably accessible and in a safe place. Note – consider having most or all of your workers trained (in first aid) to make sure a first aider is always present. Note – the illustration of the first-aid kit is very specific and includes items such as a tourniquet bandage and haemostatic gauze. These were items specifically mentioned during consultation.

	<p>Note – fires are included in workplace emergency plans as a risk that needs to be managed. There is no section on controlled fires and burn-offs as there was in the old ACOP. It was felt that this was an area for FENZ.</p> <p>Note – PPE is included in this part on the general principles of PPE, how it is used and who provides it. Specific PPE requirements are included in the relevant sections.</p> <p>Note – training, information, instruction and supervision is covered in much greater detail than the old ACOP.</p> <p>Note – communications. Workers must be equipped with a good, reliable and effective communications system. <u>Do not</u> rely on a worker's mobile phone.</p>
Part C: Site access and preparation of log landings	<p>This is a new section.</p> <p>Note – all construction standards refer to the <i>New Zealand Forest Road Engineering Manual</i>.</p> <p>Note – there is specific guidance on control measures for traffic entering and exiting the forest such as: having signage at the entrance to indicate correct radio channel, turning lights on, and having easily accessible road markers at appropriate intervals, so users can call their position on the roads.</p>
Part D: Establishment and silviculture	<p>This is a new section which covers establishment and silviculture in much more detail.</p> <p>Note – under 17.1.7 (Safe Practice with Brush Cutters) it states, 'make sure that all safety features are fitted and in working order.' There was some discussion about whether PCBUs should be able to remove the safety bar for ease of use.</p> <p>Note – there is a section on manual handling practices, which looks at how to manage the risks relating to sprains and strains.</p> <p>Note – in 17.3.8 to 17.3.10 the guidance deals with pruning from a ladder.</p> <p>Industry practice was that workers could work up a ladder at 3 metres with no fall restraint. The regulations require that where a worker could fall more than 3 metres, the employers must, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide suitable means to prevent falling. This would ordinarily mean a fall restraint device or other fall protection.</p> <p>The guidance now says that PCBUs will need to consider other ways to manage the risk if this is not reasonably practicable. It is up to the PCBU to show that those other ways effectively manage the risk.</p> <p>Note – there is a section on chainsaw thinning.</p>

	<p>Note – there is a section of chemical thinning.</p> <p>Note – there is a section on mechanised thinning which directs the reader to the section on mechanised felling for managing the risks.</p>
<p>Part E: Mobile plant and harvesting</p>	<p>This section covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mobile plant - mechanised harvesting including winch-assisted harvesting - manual felling including machine-assisted felling - cable logging including manual breaking out. <p>Mobile plant</p> <p>Note – there is updated information on protective structures on mobile plant. It is recommended that the standard for polycarbonate windshields is 32mm for the front shield of a harvester or processor.</p> <p>Note – there is a strengthened section on emergency exits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there must be at least two emergency exits that can be manually opened • they should not be blocked or hindered by protective structures • there should be tools in the cab to activate emergency exits in the case of an emergency. <p>Training for operators should include checking their knowledge and use of emergency exits <u>and their ability to use them</u>.</p> <p>Note – a process to manage risk of water entering the cab if the plant is operating near water is required, including the suitability of emergency exits (can they be manually operated) and consider having a supplementary breathing system.</p> <p>Note – Plant should have a fire suppression system in the engine bay. If there isn't a system, there needs to be another means of managing the risk of fire in the engine bay.</p> <p>There is a new section on safe procedures for maintaining and repairing mobile plant. This includes an example of an SOP for managing the risks while repairing.</p> <p>Mechanised felling</p> <p>Note – there is reinforced guidance on machine-worker separation distances.</p> <p>Note – there is guidance on chain shot separation distances.</p> <p>Note – for determining a machine's slope limits, it is recommended that SafeTree's Steep Slope Risk Assessment tool is used.</p> <p>Note – PCBU's operating plant using a winch-assist anchoring system need to have OEM or CPEng certification to determine that the winch-</p>

	<p>assist steep slope harvesting system is designed, tested and demonstrated to be safe.</p> <p>Note – all winch-assist and mobile tailholds should have a movement alarm to warn if the anchor moves and <u>immediately</u> alerts the operator.</p> <p>Note – mobile plant and winch systems need to have engineering and mechanical inspections <u>appropriate to their age and use</u>. This differs from having fixed period inspections.</p> <p>Manual tree felling</p> <p>There is much more detailed guidance on manual tree felling.</p> <p>Note – all dangerous or wind-affect/damaged trees should be felled by machine where practicable.</p> <p>Note – (under PPE) it is industry best practice that workers ‘have a high-vis helmet that meets <u>recognised industry standards</u>.’</p> <p>Note – workers should have a lone worker (man down) device or digital radio equivalent.</p> <p>Note – it is industry best practice that all fallers and observers carry RT.</p> <p>Note – all fallers and any observers should have RT-enabled hearing protection.</p> <p>Note – an observer should be available on site and used when a faller is uncertain or in a high-risk situation.</p> <p>Note – observers should be skilled in recognising and managing risk. This differs from the previous requirement of having a specific qualification.</p> <p>Note – managing the risk of felling dead trees. The guidance is that dead trees should be identified before the faller begins working the area, assess the risk they pose and manage the risk accordingly.</p> <p>Note – machine felling should always be considered the first option for felling wind-damaged trees.</p> <p>Note – if windthrow or wind-damaged trees are to be manually felled the only people that should do this have the appropriate windthrow skill/unit qualifications, experience and competence to fell windthrow.</p> <p>Note – there is reinforced guidance on machine-assisted felling with clear differentiation on who controls what between the plant operator and the manual feller.</p>
--	--

	<p>Cable logging</p> <p>The section on cable logging and has been reinforced and includes more technical detail.</p> <p>Note – all yarders and yarder towers should be inspected annually by a Certified Board for Inspection Personnel (CBIP) certified Yarder engineering Safety Inspector and tagged as certified.</p> <p>Note – the yarder should be reinspected by a CPEng with knowledge of the tower if there is a tower tip-over or if a part is damaged.</p> <p>Note – structural changes to towers should only be made under the direction of the manufacturer or a CPEng.</p> <p>Manual breaking out</p> <p>The breaking-out section has also been reinforced.</p> <p>Note – the head breaker-out and spotter should have hands-free RT for communicating with each other and the hauler operator.</p> <p>Note – the risks of retrieving a strawline need to be managed with procedures for clearing an obstruction and agreed practices for the release of tension on lines to avoid recoil.</p> <p>Note – managing stems on the landing. PCBUs must eliminate the risks from unhooking stems so far as is reasonably practicable (such as by using electronic chokers. It is noted that the poleman is one of the most hazardous jobs on a landing site and anything that can be done to eliminate the risks to them, should be done.</p>
<p>Part F: Work on landings and loading and unloading trucks</p>	<p>This section has been reinforced.</p> <p>Note – establish exclusion zones and safe work areas</p> <p>Note – if a mechanised processor is operating make sure that there is a 70 m exclusion zone to protect against chain shot injury</p> <p>Note – make sure that log stacks are no higher than the safe capacity of the log handling equipment and are kept on level ground and angled to ensure stability.</p> <p>Note – the trick driver and loader operator need to be in constant communication and if communication is lost at any time, the loading process should stop until communication resumes.</p> <p>Note – the guidance refers to the <i>Log Transport Safety Council Manual</i> for detailed guidance on signals and load safety.</p>

	<p>Note – the illustration of safe loading zone has been changed to make sure that any safe areas for the driver are at least 6 metres from the front of the cab.</p> <p>Note – when loading in the dark, anyone working on the landing should be wearing day-night high-vis vests and helmets.</p> <p>Note – the loading area should be adequately illuminated with additional lighting provided by, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the loading lights of the truck - additional lighting on the loader over and above the driving lights - lighting systems on the log landing. <p>Note – all loads need to be restrained safely and in accordance with the <i>Log Transport Safety Council Manual</i>.</p> <p>Note – drivers can move up to 100 metres to a safe area before securing the load.</p> <p>Wood residual and biomass processing</p> <p>There is a new section on managing the risks of wood residual and biomass processing.</p> <p>Note - slash on landings is covered with The New Zealand Forest Service <i>Slash Risk Management Handbook</i> referred to for detailed guidance.</p>
--	--