



Company Safety Programs “They’re Just Good Business”

This fact sheet will outline the importance of a Safety Program and provide a detailed summary of the components of a proper Safety Program. Christmas tree growers are doing a lot good work in regard to safety. This is reflected in our low workers compensation board (WCB) rates. If we weren't doing good work, our rates would be up around 10, 12, or \$15 per 100.

Safety Program

Company safety programs focus on systems and processes. For instance, let's say your safety program dictates you need a fire extinguisher. A proper safety system would check to ensure the fire extinguisher is charged, in the right location, and is accessible. If you have systems that check those things, then when you need that fire extinguisher, you're more likely to have it. Compliance type system would ensure you go and buy a fire extinguisher, but do not make sure the extinguisher is in the right location, charged, and workable.

What you can expect from a proper safety program in the long term is a safer workplace. Most people are committed to safety, being employers and employees. It's a neutral topic. For this reason, a safety program can be a neutral

vehicle to improve communication within a business.

A well working safety program has all the components that will help protect your business, employees, and family. The owner of the company has to demonstrate to employees through their actions that safety is key. It's dependent upon leadership. Safety does not start at the grassroots level. All safety programs should include strong documentation procedure. Documentation is proof that you've done what you said you were going to do. A procedure is a written document that outlines how you're going to carry out your policies.



Basic Components of a Safety Program

- Company safety policy
- General rules
- Hazard Assessment
- Inspections
- Maintenance
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Safe Work Procedures
- Independent Investigations
- Employee Representation
- Safety Meetings
- Training
- Emergency Preparedness

Health & Safety Policies

A company safety program is comprised of a series of health and safety policies that outline the appropriate course of actions in regard to safety. Health and safety policies within in company sets the stage for a safe workplace in a number of ways. It indicates to your workers that safety is a priority. There are three basic components of a health and safety policy. They are a statement of commitment, statement of shared responsibility, and a statement of cooperation.

Company Rules

Every company should have general rules outlining the behaviour and actions expected in the workplace. These rules should be reviewed by employees at the time of hire. The rules should include the obvious, such as no substances on the job or no fighting. The more you have written down the more protected you are from liability if you end up in court.

The rules should outline the consequences if rules are violated. Depending on the rule broken you can choose the severity of punishment ranging from dismissal to being written up.

Hazard Assessments

Employers are responsible for identifying and controlling the hazards in the workplace. Health hazards are usually longer-term hazards, such as exposure to chemicals, which can also be short-term. Safety hazards include, such as broken bones and cuts that occur as the result of workplace activity. The key factors of hazards include People, Equipment, Materials, Environment, and Process. Hazards can be identified through workplace inspections and task analysis. Once a hazard has been identified, there are a number of options to control it. Perhaps the hazard can be eliminated through automation or by substituting the hazard with a safer option. Sometimes the hazard can be engineered out. For instance, installing guards on hazardous equipment. Administrative controls constitute implementing standard operating procedures when there is a safer manner to complete a task. Finally, personal protective equipment (PPE)

| <i>Severity</i> | <i>Probability</i> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>1-Catastrophic</i> | <i>A-Probable</i> |
| <i>2- Critical</i> | <i>B- Reasonably Probable</i> |
| <i>3- Marginal</i> | <i>C-Remote</i> |
| <i>4- Negligible</i> | <i>D- Extremely Remote</i> |



should be used to decrease the health and safety risks of hazards. For instance, wearing chainsaw pants when harvesting Christmas trees.

As part of a Hazard Assessment, the hazards should be ranked in accordance with the severity and probability of causing an incident. Those with the highest severity and probability should be prioritized and receive more attention.

Those managing the worksite should create a site-specific check list of hazards that should be assessed before work starts. In the Christmas tree industry, this list would include the hazards associated with chainsaw operation. Once identified, the hazards should be recorded in the daily agenda. These findings should be shared verbally with the crew before starting work. This interaction should be documented. Given that hazard identification is a shared responsibility of all on the work site, all workers should be looking for potential hazards. These findings should be reported, and information passed on to the rest of the crew.

Inspections

Inspections are a tool that ensures things are the way as they should be. This is a responsibility that should be shared by all members of management. Inspections should be carried out on a planned basis. However, it never hurts to check spontaneously. At a minimum, formal inspection should be carried out quarterly. As part of the inspection the results should be documented, and corrective actions should be taken as required. For instance, if the first aid kit is missing certain bandages, they should be replaced right away. Documentation should be collected both when items are found to be missing or broken, and when the problem is resolved.

As expected, during an inspection, the inspector should be continuously trying to identify potential hazards. Daily pre-work inspections are informal in nature. They are not scheduled and should be consisted as part of the daily routine. Workers should be encouraged to speak up when they identify potential hazards and respected when they do so.

Most job sites require a Saint John's Ambulance Level 2 First Aid Kit (job sites with between 5 and 19 people). The level of first aid kit you require is dependent on the number people you have working for you, but you must ensure you have a kit that meets the Nova Scotia guidelines. It is always a good idea to have two first aid kits. One that you use day-to-day and replenish as needed and another that you leave unopened in case of emergencies. This will ensure you always have a fully stocked kit on hand in case of a major emergency. If you lose the list of required items for your first aid kit and you need to inspect your kit, you can find the list on the manufacturers [website](#).



Maintenance

This is fundamental to any well working business. The specified maintenance schedule should be followed from the owner's manual on all equipment. Maintenance can be both preventative and predictive. Preventative maintenance includes oil changes and greasing. Predictive maintenance on the other hand could include running tests on oil samples to determine potential future problems.

Before and during regular operation, operators should always be looking for problems that could lead to hazards and breakdowns. Proper maintained both saves you time, money, and helps decrease the risk of injury on the job site.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

All PPE should be CSA approved and be appropriate for the task.

- PPE for Christmas Trees (reference Forest Professional)

- High-visibility clothing
- Hardhat
- Safety glasses with side shields
- Face protection when grinding, welding or operating a chainsaw
- Safety boots CSA Grade 2 (grade 1 when operating power saw)
- Hearing protection when > 85 dB
- Leg protection
- Leather gloves



Safe Work Procedure (SWP)

These are the administrative controls enacted when a hazard cannot be eliminated. Because of the large number of hazards in a workplace business are unable to create SWP for every hazard. For this reason, those with a high probability and severity should be prioritized. The need for SWPs is unfortunately often shown after a near miss or an incident occurs. Those who are actively working on a task should be encouraged to participate in the creation of SWPs. These individuals are the subject experts. SWPs should be reviewed periodically and should always be easily assessable to employees.

Sample SWP- Working alone Procedure

Working alone has the added hazard of isolation, that if assistance is required there is no one to assist. However, under unusual circumstances occasionally there is a need for equipment to be separated and employees will have to work alone. To manage the risk and minimize the time an employee will be down the following procedure must be followed when working alone:

1. Must be approved by **Safe Logger Inc.** prior.
2. Employee must have a minimum of Emergency First Aid Training.
3. Employee must have means of communication (cell or 2 way radio).
4. Employee must have dependable Transportation.
5. Employee must have remote location plan.
6. Employee must be assigned a SPOT unit if cell coverage is unreliable.
7. **Safe Logger Inc.** management will normally be the contact for the check in procedure. If another person is the contact that person must have a map with directions where the employee is working and a means/ability to provide assistance.



8. Contact Procedure:

Contact to be initiated by employee (call, text, spot message)

Message to be sent: OK, OK but need assistance, Emergency SEND HELP

Times for check in are to be pre determined

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Upon arrival to worksite | 6:00 – 6:30 am |
| Mid Morning | 9:00 – 9:30 am |
| Mid Day | 12:00 – 12:30 pm |
| Mid Afternoon | 3:00 – 3:30 pm |
| End of Day | 5:00 – 5:30 pm |

If contact by employee is not made, **Safe Logger Inc.** shall initiate contact

If contact cannot be made, **Safe Logger Inc.** management shall go to the worksite to determine the reason and provide aid.

Incident Investigation

Incidents encompass either injury or damage to material, plant, or equipment. The goal is not to blame but rather to determine the root cause and prevent re-occurrence. 80% of investigations cite human error even though research shows that 80% of incidents are caused by something other than operator error. For instance, the processes or workplace set-up can be the root cause of human error. It is important to identify the true root cause of an incident. Research has shown that when a root cause is not determined, the incident is likely to repeat within 7 years. The point of incident reports is not to accumulate paperwork. Once completed these reports should be analyzed to determine trends so that problems can be addressed.

Employee Representation

Employee representation is not a legality for workplaces with less than five employees. For businesses with between 5 and 19 employees a health and safety representative are required. Businesses with over 20 employees are required to have a Joint Operations Health and Safety Committees (JOHSC).

The representative employees cannot be chosen by the employer but have to be elected by their peers to obtain the position. These representatives should be involved in safety programs, investigations, and inspections. These individual are meant to act as the link between management and employees on matters concerning safety. It is important that employees know who their representatives are and have access to contact them with concerns. A poster should be erected in a common area with this information as well as the 1-800 number of the department of labor. JOHSC are more formal and should never consist of more than 50% management of which members should rotate on a schedule. Meetings should have a co-chair and minutes should be kept.

Safety Meetings

Safety meetings should be relatively short (30min), engaging interactions, that occur roughly once a month. For employers, this is both an opportunity to share information and collect information in regard to workplace safety. Safety concerns should be addressed, hazards reported, and information concerning



outstanding issues reported on. This requires conversation that are open, respectful, and free of criticism. Having positive interactions are key to fostering safety culture. Safety meetings are an opportunity to provide training as well. During these meetings minutes should be kept and redistributed to employees.

Training

Employers are responsible for insuring that employee are competent in the work they are doing. In Nova Scotia, there are certain legislative requirements for training depending on the job. These include First aid; WHMIS; TDG; Chainsaw; Air Brake Endorsement; Fall Arrest; Confined Space Entry; Pesticide Handling; etc. A record of employee legislative training must be kept. Records need to be kept for any on the job training undertaken. This includes who provided the training and an outline of the training provided. Employee orientation is when copies of certification should be collected and a review of company safety programs, rules, and policies should occur. As always, documentation is key.

A fantastic training resource for Nova Scotia Farmers is [Farm Safety Nova Scotia](#).



Emergency Preparedness

Emergency Preparedness should encompass preparedness for fire, medical, and environmental emergencies. When an emergency occurs, it is essential to notify the appropriate authorities and get help as soon as possible. As an employer it is important to help employees stay calm so that the situation can be dealt with. You must have the appropriate resources on site and ensure the appropriate help can get to the work site.

As tree lots are often in rural areas where it may be difficult to access help in an emergency you should have a remote location plan site map.

| REMOTE LOCATION PLAN SITE MAP | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Nearest Civic Address: | _____ |
| Cell Phone Location: | _____ |
| GPS Coordinates: | _____ |
| Road Indicator: | _____ |
| Nearest Hospital: | _____ |
| Nearest Fire Department: | _____ |
| Nearest Ambulance: | _____ |
| Turn-by-Turn Directions: | _____ |
| | _____ |
| | _____ |
| | _____ |
| SKETCH/PHOTO/GOOGLE EARTH | |

Occupational Health & Safety Act

As an employer it is a good idea to become familiar with the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The following sections are of particular importance:

- Section 2 Internal Responsibility System



- Section 13 Employers' Precautions and Duties
- Section 17 Employees' Precautions and Duties
- Section 29 Joint Operations Health and Safety Committees (if you have over 20 employees)
- Section 33 Health and Safety Representative
- Section 43 Right to Refuse Work
- Section 63 Notice of Accident at the Worksite

Due Diligence

Due diligence encompasses “doing what a responsible person would do”. If a significant incident occurs the RCMP and AEL (Advanced Education and Labour) will investigate to determine the cause and if negligence was to blame. The consequences of negligence can be significant. The best way to prove due diligence is having a safety program in place and proper documentation. Documentation may seem daunting or even a burden, but at the end of the day documentation is how you demonstrate due diligence. Simply put, due diligence is the defense against negligence.

Audits are an important tool in proving due diligence that is carried out by impartial 3rd party. Auditors provide an outside set of eyes that may catch things you miss. This should be a constructive process. Simply by undergoing an audit it signals that you take safety seriously and are taking proactive steps to keep your employees safe. For this reason, audits can be viewed as a form of risk management as it mitigates the likelihood of incidents. The types of audits are process and compliance audits. Compliance audits are mandatory and process audits review business operations in regard to safety and are taken under the directive on the business.

Forestry Safety Society of Nova Scotia is a local organization that provides safety audits. If interested, you can contact Al Angrignon at 902-956-1685 or visit their website at <https://fss.ns.ca> for information about how to arrange an audit.

