



Safe Loading Practices for Christmas Trees

Come September, Christmas tree growers are gearing up for tree harvest. As Nova Scotia is home to the Balsam Fir Capital of the World, our trees are enjoyed worldwide. To transport these trees, the process begins with loading. The process of loading and transporting Christmas trees is included as part of the handling process.

Handling trees with care while loading can help maintain quality and longevity of the product. Employing the use of safe loading practices can ensure a safe work environment for employees. These job sites have various potential hazards. This factsheet will help growers identify and mitigate these hazards.

Factors Contributing to Creating Hazards

There are five key factors that contribute to creating hazards in the workplace.

People: Lack of education and training can increase the risk of workplace hazards. Proper training can reduce unsafe work habits.

Equipment: Working around vehicles, trailers and other equipment can pose risks, especially if not used correctly.

Materials: Unused materials and clutter around a jobsite can create unnecessary obstacles. Handling Christmas trees can create ergonomic issues.

Environment: During the fall and winter months, weather can be unpredictable. Weather events can cause accumulation of ice and snow on jobsites.

Process: The entire process of loading Christmas trees includes a combination of people, equipment/machinery, materials as well as environment. Hazards created by the loading process might include dust, vapors, and fumes.



Common Hazards

It is the supplier's and employee's responsibility to identify and mitigate risks.

People:

- Use of poor ergonomics
- Lack of knowledge and training
- Use of unsafe work practices

Equipment:

- Misuse of equipment and machinery
- Use of unsafe equipment
- Creeping of vehicle or trailer
- Driver take-off

Materials:

- Unused materials and clutter surrounding jobsite
- Falling cargo

Environmental:

- Water/ice/snow egress
- Working in poor weather conditions

Process:

- Changes in elevation when loading
- Fumes from equipment and vehicle



Mitigating Risk

People: Ensure employees have proper knowledge and training on workplace tasks such as ergonomics, securing trees, safe unloading of trees, equipment, and communication.

Equipment: Regularly inspect equipment and machinery to ensure they are in safe working condition. Search for unsafe guarding or barriers, damage, misuse of tools and equipment, inadequate warning systems. Conduct routine maintenance on all tools, equipment, and machinery.

Materials: Remove tools, equipment and other materials that are being unused. This will reduce clutter and tripping hazards around a worksite. Ensure Christmas trees are being handled with care, while using safe ergonomics.

Environment: Be prepared for various weather events. Remove accumulation of ice and snow around jobsite. Consider providing employees with ice cleats in slippery conditions.

Process: Reduce large changes in elevation when loading Christmas trees. Ensure trees are properly secured to vehicle or trailer. Work in accordance with Occupational Health and Safety Nova Scotia, as well as Farm Safety Nova Scotia to create a safe and healthy work environment.



Resources

Farm Safety Nova Scotia: <https://farmsafetyns.ca/>

Occupational Health and Safety Nova Scotia: <https://www.worksafeforlife.ca/Home/About-Us/Occupational-Health-Safety>

<https://www.redwoodlogistics.com/top-7-loading-and-unloading-best-practices/>

https://www.up.com/aboutup/community/inside_track/christmas-tree-journey-12-12-2016.htm

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/521231/10-secrets-christmas-tree-farmers>

<https://weirtreefarms.com/faq.php>

www.creteplant.com

