

Forest Worker – Road Travel Risk!

Every year the forest industry receives many reports on road crashes and near hits! Most do not result in fatalities or injuries, but some have, indicating a need for caution!

While the forest industry has worked hard to eliminate sources of harm, the risk of a crash on a forestry or back country public road, resulting in injury or costly damage is real for all forestry workers during work travel.



Additionally, it is a sobering fact that groups of forestry workers i.e. that travel together, are often from the same local community. They may be workers from the same (foreign) country, the same whanau or iwi (close relatives). At such times, when tragedy strikes, the impacts can be huge! In view of these points, please take careful note of this safety alert!

INC2709 23/09/20 – Seven Injured

Description – Two planting crews finished at a remote planting site, north of Wairoa in the Hawke’s Bay. They had intended to finish early and then travel to New Plymouth, however, as work was not finished by 1:00 pm the two foremen decided to stay overnight in Wairoa and travel the next day.

At 2:30pm, the seven occupants of the first work van, all from the same Pacific Island, departed for Wairoa. Tired, some fell asleep while the driver and co-pilot talked and shared a snack. At around 3:00pm the driver was suddenly distracted by talking in the back of the vehicle. Coming into a corner, he lost control of the van in the gravel, which left the road and collided with a tree. All seven occupants sustained injuries and required a check-over at the Wairoa base hospital.



Don't Neglect – Duties or Reports!

Given the accident was not reported to the Police and there were no official checks into the van's pre-accident condition a report that the vehicle "had mechanical issues to be fixed" could not be validated with any certainty. Nonetheless, any vehicle faults, reported by a driver must be thoroughly investigated by a qualified mechanic. Also, any road incident resulting in injury must be reported ASAP to the NZ Police if they do not attend.

Investigation – Some Key findings...

The investigation has not shown any one factor at fault, rather a series of possible causes, two of which are discussed below:

- **Driver Training and Competency:** Licenced drivers often lack experience on back-country gravel roads. Employers must provide suitable training for all driving conditions and follow-up with regular [Safe Behavioural Observations](#) (SBO).
- **Fatigue Management:** Forest work can require long hours along with high physical demands. To prevent fatigue employers should aim for a maximum of eight hours of work and two hours of travel per day or set weekly maximums ¹.



Managing Risk – Please Also Consider!

1. Join the '[Puataunofu](#)' program (as appropriate), which will be run by PF Olsen in 2021.
2. Improve road hazard signage including call-up markers (increasing the frequency in high-risk zones) and instruct vehicle drivers on the importance of calling every marker.
3. Apply the [3C's](#) – consulting with other forestry Contractors or members of the public.
4. Ensure [safe driving](#) e.g. by wearing the right footwear – not driving in forestry gumboots.

¹ Please review the [Safe OP – Fatigue Management, Worker Health and Facilities NZ](#) (see section 4).