

# **Safety and Health in Forestry Work**

International Labour Office, Geneva, 1969. Pp. 159. Price 18 shillings.

This is a very useful publication and it should be a valuable addition to the library of every establishment involved in the training of Foresters, Forest Work Supervisors and Forest Workers.

It is a Code of Practice prepared by I.L.O. with the assistance of six experts— Mr. L. A. Aitken, Safety Adviser, Canada Department of Labour, Ottawa; Mr. R. Chandra, Chief Executive Officer, Government of India, Logging Training Project, Dehra Dun; Mr. R. Grabner, Lower Austria Agriculture and Forestry Inspectorate, Vienna; Mr. D. L. McNeil Director, African Timber and Plywood (Nigeria) Limited, Sapele; Mr. G. Skaaret, Forestry Section, Workers' Protection Board, Stockholm; Mr. K. Zaremba-Czereyski, Professor, Polish Forestry Research Institute, Warsaw.

The general provisions of the Code outline the principles which should be applied by employers when selecting forestry workers and placing them in employment, emphasising the importance of taking into consideration experience, aptitude, physical capacity and mental ability. It outlines the duties and responsibilities of workers and points out that it is their duty to refrain from careless or reckless practices which inevitably lead to disastrous consequences.

In a chapter on "Medical Care and Supervision" pre-employment medical examination and periodical re-examination of workers is recommended so that workers who are found to constitute a risk to the health or safety of others may be treated accordingly, an excellent recommendation which should benefit employers and workers alike. Other chapters provide information and advice on hand and power tools, engines, hydraulic machinery, flammable liquids, poisonous plants and insects, and dangerous substances as well as guidance on precautions necessary during felling, limbing, skidding, loading and associated operations.

The Code contains advice and guidance which if accepted and put into practice should do much to help to eliminate accidents and safeguard the health of workers in forestry.

It is presented in the form of a body of concise recommendations for the guidance of authorities, professional groups, employers and workers (including self employed forestry workers), forest equipment manufacturers and all those with responsibilities in occupational safety and health in forestry.

It covers the duties and responsibilities of employers and workers, the obligations of equipment manufacturers and suppliers of dangerous substances as well as occupational risks involved in operations which have to be undertaken to establish or maintain forests and to remove their produce.

It does not cover sawmills, pulpmills, chipboard plants or other factories which use timber.

The Code is designed to serve as a guide and is not intended to replace national laws or regulations, or accepted standards already provided to protect forest workers. The need to comply with relevant national laws is stressed in some of its provisions. This assumes that such laws exist. If they do not, it is high time the authorities responsible for the health and safety of their workers took action to remedy this neglect. The necessity for this Code of Practice to help to prevent accidents and to safeguard health is undeniable as standards of safety are virtually non-existent in this field in some developing countries. Economic pressures too are forcing the industry to introduce (prematurely perhaps) new equipment and new chemical substances of which little is known — thus adding to the hazards which the workers must face.

The book is divided into 35 short sections each of which deals with a separate subject. The lay-out is simple and the information available is well presented — an important consideration in a reference book. The language is simple enough to make it understood even by an uneducated worker. Most of the matters on which recommendations are made are adequately covered and excellent advice and guidance provided on what to do, and what not to do, as well as when, where and how to act under normal, and if needs be, under abnormal

circumstances. Most of the recommendations are clear and concise. A few, however, are too vague, and do not convey the message clearly to the less intelligent. For example — on "Operation of Vehicles" one recommendation reads "Drivers of trucks should not drive for long periods without adequate rest." "Long" and "adequate" need to be defined. The drivers are entitled to more guidance from the experts! On "Selection and placement of workers" another recommendation reads "No person should be employed on work for which he is physically or mentally unsuitable". In theory this is ideal but the practical application is less simple.

Employers and employees should not fail to realise that in providing this Code of Practice I.L.O. is making a genuine attempt to establish a standard of safety and health in forest work to benefit all parties concerned and the effort is worthy of support. Laws and regulations alone are not sufficient. They must be enforced and the attitude of those involved is important. Education, proper training, and the provision of facilities to improve the skills and efficiency of workers throughout their years of service must not be neglected. Safety precautions should be built into every action of every operation until it becomes second nature to workers to guard their own and their work-mates safety and health against possible dangers. This is emphasised throughout provisions of this Code..

The State is the largest employer of forestry workers in this country. During the last decade the Department responsible has achieved much in providing better working conditions for them. Many of the recommendations in the book have already been put into practice. Machinery is also in operation for investigating and for ascertaining the necessity for further improvements and precautionary measures which if considered desirable are likely to be put into practice. Employers and employees in the private sector of forestry in this country are likely to be influenced by the attitude of the State. If one is to judge by the progress to date full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Code should not be too long delayed in Ireland.

The book can be recommended to all for whom its use is intended. Employers, workers, advisors, supervisors and all others who have responsibilities in occupational safety and health in forestry cannot afford to be without it. It is a sound investment which if given reasonable time to mature should pay dividends.

Pocket size, well bound, and printed on good paper it should be an excellent companion for the practical man who has a sense of responsibility for the welfare of those working in his charge.

It can be obtained through major booksellers or direct from I.L.O. (Sales Section), 1211 Geneva, Switzerland).

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