



# Know when to stop

**Life on site is rarely straightforward. In the forest environment there are many unknowns and unexpected situations. These often fall outside of the original risk assessment.**

■ What we are good at is finding a way through these problems and getting the job done. What we are poor at is stopping and taking stock of the situation. When faced with a problem and you have a solution in mind, you need to ask yourself "What's the worst that can happen?"

It's all very well seeing how you can solve the problem, but you must risk assess the solution. The Safety Team have received several reports that made us sit back and wonder why people took certain actions. For example, standing on top of a machine where a tree has come back and

landed on the cab and cutting the stem of the tree with a chainsaw. In the cold light of day this seems like madness, but on site there was a situation to remedy and this was a way of achieving the solution.

You must stand back when things don't go as planned and risk assess not only the situation but the solution to the situation and consider:

- Are there standard controls in a FISA Guide that you can follow?
- Does your site risk assessment or site rules cover the situation?
- If not, can you SAFELY resolve the situation or do you need to speak with the Forest Works Manager for advice or to help make the situation safe?

You mustn't carry on and resolve the issue yourself, putting yourself and others in danger as a result.

A recent incident took place where an excavator was using a goal posted crossing point under a powerline. The crossing had previously been used during extraction by a forwarder. Superficially it looked fine at the site inspection, but once the excavator tried to use the crossing the operator found it was rutted with a large stump in the middle he couldn't pass over. He then crossed under the powerlines outside of the goal posts. Once this incident was raised the site had to be stopped until the issue could be resolved. Had the operator stopped to think fully about the dangers of crossing outside of the goalposts and called his FWM, the issue could have been dealt with more swiftly and without anyone being put at risk.

## Learning Points:

1. Stop, look around you and assess the situation.
2. Risk assess your proposed solution to a problem. Ask yourself "what's the worst that can happen?"
3. Think about the various safety rules in FISA guides and site documentation.
4. If you cannot make the work safe yourself, then call your FWM.



Above: Image depicts the deep ruts under the goalposts with the high stump marked with a red/white pole.

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# Going Underground

**A ground preparation contractor on a new planting scheme got a surprise last month when his plough pulled up a 50 volt underground telecommunications cable.**

■ The site was a new planting scheme and service drawings from the various agencies had been obtained and the



Above: The 50v telecommunications cable pulled up by the plough. You can clearly see how shallow the cable was buried.

services identified. The cable that was struck was not buried deeply and ran to a control hut containing several monitoring devices. It is not uncommon for this type of cable to not be marked on plans.

It is vital that we do all that is reasonably practicable to identify and control the risks on site. This includes talking with landowners, workers and locals, as well as looking for visual clues such as items requiring services to be run to them or gas pipe marker posts.

### Learning Points:

1. In areas where the presence of underground services can reasonably be expected then service drawings must be obtained and checked, with known services verified and marked on site.
2. In all areas visual clues must be looked for and local people asked about services.
3. Where necessary, competent persons should use scanning equipment to check for and verify services.

# Maintenance Monday?

**OK, so you don't necessarily have to maintain your machinery on a Monday, but you should get into a routine with your checks and maintenance.**

■ The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) requires you to maintain all your work equipment in a safe and operable condition. This is best done by following the manufacturer's handbook.

You should also keep records of your regular checks and any maintenance carried out. This doesn't mean the daily visual check, but a more regular, weekly check. Should your machinery be involved in an incident you will need to be able to prove that you have carried out suitable and sufficient maintenance on your work equipment.

Tilhill have provided a series of maintenance check books for contractors to use to make this easier for the main machine types. If you are a contractor, ask your Forest Works Manager to supply you with copies of the relevant versions.

Also consider the competence of the person carrying out the maintenance. Are they competent in what they are doing, especially if it is a safety critical system?



Above: The range of Maintenance Check Books available from Tilhill.

### Remember:

- Work Equipment must be maintained in a safe and operable condition.
- You must carry out regular checks of your work equipment.
- You should keep a record of the checks and maintenance.
- Those carrying out maintenance must be competent.

## In The News Elsewhere

**A building firm has been fined £30,000 after the death of 'a valuable and popular employee' who was killed by falling soil in a collapsed trench.**

■ The 64-year-old was carrying out drainage work and was working alone as a mechanical excavator when the tragedy happened. A section of the trench collapsed while he was in the trench trapping him and, as a result, he sustained fatal injuries with the cause of death being traumatic asphyxia and chest injuries.

The building company pleaded guilty to two breaches of the Health and Safety at Work Act in that they failed to ensure a safe system of work was in place for carrying out drainage excavation works and in particular failed to ensure that the soils from the excavation were battened back to a safe angle. It also admitted failing to ensure that there was a clear communication policy with the employee in place while he was working alone.

The Judge said an aggravating factor was that the risk was well known and readily identifiable. He took into account the company's safety record and working practices and from a starting point of £45,000, reduced the fine to £30,000 to be paid within two months.

### Learning Points:

1. When excavating ground ensure that the excavation is stable so as not to pose a risk of collapse to any person that has to enter the excavation. This may be done by sloping the edges away or shoring the sides.
2. Do not pile material up on the side of an excavation that could fall back into the excavation.
3. Consider the effect of the weight of machinery on the sides of the excavation.
4. Where an excavation could pose a risk to persons working in it then it must be inspected at the start of each day.
5. Do your lone worker arrangements work? Have you tested them? If you rely on a buddy system and mobile phone call, how does it operate when there is no signal on site?

**ACCIDENTS AT  
WORK CAN  
CHANGE LIVES  
IN AN INSTANT**



# February 2017 – Safety & Assurance Bulletin briefing

I have been personally briefed in the contents of this Safety & Assurance Bulletin.

Please add any questions relating to this briefing or any other health, safety and environmental matters you wish to raise:

Please add any suggestions on health, safety and environmental matters:

I have been briefed by: \_\_\_\_\_ My District is: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that I am encouraged to submit comment and contribution from this bulletin.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ORIGINAL** sheet to be held at District.

Send a **COPY** to: Head of Safety, Tilhill Forestry, Birchden Farm, Broadwater Forest Lane, Groombridge, Kent, TN3 9NR. Fax: 01892 860441. Email: [ios@tilhill.com](mailto:ios@tilhill.com)

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