

## Help make the Forestry Commission a safer place to work

The FCTU are urging union members in the Forestry Commission (FC) to rise to the challenge of making this organisation, and where possible the wider forestry industry, the safest place to work, by becoming a Health & Safety representative.

Members rightly expect to be able to return home after work from a safe and healthy working environment. This is more than just about operational site specific safety, but about our culture and the need to report near misses and failures in Health and Safety.

In an industry wide summit hosted by the FC and including key players in the timber industry, the Health and Safety Executive reported that, *our industry killed and injured more people than the construction industry*. The fatal accident rate in Forestry for April 05 – March 10 is 10.4 per 100,000 workers. This compares poorly to construction, which is 2.8 per 100,000 workers.

This is a damning indictment for the forest industry when compared to other industries. Many will see that the FC takes Health and Safety seriously, however, the facts still remain that our safety record is poor. Many of us will have witnessed poor examples of Health and Safety as a union member, did you challenge this or did you turn away?

The FC are reacting to this by developing a strategy and action plan to bring about the necessary changes to meet the challenge of making our industry safer. We will adopt the motto **“Think Safe, Stay Safe”** which is used by Forest Industry safety Accord (FISA), and ensure that everyone understands that Health and Safety is about people – “it is about me”.

Complacency is a killer and by remaining complacent you may very well be the next victim.

Trade Unions take pride in being able to demonstrate that by having union H&S representatives in the workplace, then that workplace is safer as a result and the cost to the employer is reduced. [Trades Union Congress - The Union Effect](#)

Here in the FC we have a very poor ratio of union H&S representatives to the total number of staff in the FC. This means that we are missing a vital part of the checks and balances that are needed to ensure that any workplace in the FC is as safe as it can be.

We ask that members rise to the challenge and become H&S representatives for their local unit. Training by your union will be provided free and will give you the legal functions, skills and knowledge to enable you to easily carry out your new duties.

The FC will support you in this by giving you [facility time](#) to undertake the training and to provide the time to enable you to undertake your role as Trade Union H&S Representative. These representatives make a huge difference in the workplace by promoting a good safety culture and allowing staff to raise issues that concern them.

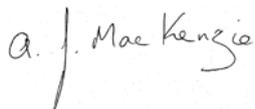
Being an H&S representative can be a very rewarding experience, and you will be offered high quality training and support by your union. Perhaps the most important role that a representative plays (other than legal functions) is simply being there and talking to members regularly about their concerns.

The law leaves it to unions, in consultation with the employer, to decide how many reps are needed for any workplace – but once a rep has been appointed, the laws give them significant rights:

- represent employees in discussions with the employer on health, safety or welfare issues and in discussions with HSE or other enforcing authorities
- investigate hazards and dangerous occurrences
- investigate complaints
- carry out inspections of the workplace and inspect relevant documents
- attend safety committees
- be paid for time spent on carrying out their functions and to undergo training

To become an H&S representative you need to apply via your own union through their website. Follow the instructions on “becoming an H&S representative”, or talk to your local union representative for more information.

Do not leave this to someone else; we can all make a difference. It is down to all of us to take responsibility in making sure that we “**Think Safe, Stay Safe**”.



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[www.fctu.org.uk](http://www.fctu.org.uk)