INTRODUCTION

Despite improved safety efforts, too many people are still getting killed or suffering life-changing injuries in the forest haulage industry. Because conditions are so challenging, even the most experienced drivers are at risk.

This handbook contains important information to help keep you safe — on the road and in the forest. We know it includes some advice you may have heard before. But because it’s so fundamental to your safety, we make no apologies for repeating it.

The good news is that today’s hauliers are more safety conscious than ever before, with drivers taking personal responsibility for their own safety. However, we believe there is still considerable room for improvement, which is why we urge you to keep looking out for hazards, challenge poor safety standards and work with us to constantly improve safety.

Safety is simply about stopping people from getting hurt.

First published by FISA in 2015.
This second edition published in 2016. Copyright 2016
PLAN AHEAD

• Assess the risks
• Be prepared
• Pre-commencement meeting
• Get proper training
• Check your vehicle
• Plan your route
• Watch your speed

STAY SAFE IN THE FOREST

• Talk about it
• Be aware
• Understand forest operations
• Stay clear of power lines
• Load timber safely
• Secure your load
• Do not attempt recovery

DELIVER SAFELY

• See and be seen
• Unload timber safely
• Clean up

FURTHER READING

ABOUT FISA

CONTACT US
When you’re a driver, the best part of the job is when your wheels are turning. However, a few minutes spent preparing before you set off could make the difference between arriving safely and not arriving at all.

**ASSESS THE RISKS**

Many people think that risk assessments are just health and safety gone mad. But a good risk assessment is nothing more than a simple document that identifies the hazards (the things that could cause serious harm) and the risks (the probability of something actually going wrong).

They cover things like driving on forest roads, loading and unloading, and working close to forestry operations. The chances are you’re already assessing all these risks in your own head — it’s what being an experienced driver is all about. However, you can never have too much information.

Risk assessments also cover new hazards (for example, road maintenance) and things you might not have thought of, such as driving in a forest used by mountain bikers. Most importantly, they highlight the control measures that need to be put in place to stop you and other people getting hurt.

You should be given an up-to-date risk assessment document for every job you do. So, make sure you ask.

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**AN EXAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT**

**HAZARD**

Falling logs from a timber stack.

**THE RISK**

Low, if stacking is done properly and loading is carried out with care.

**WHO MIGHT BE HARMED**

The haulier, other forestry workers, members of the public (walkers, cyclists, etc).

**CONTROL**

Stack heights should not exceed product length where possible. Stacks to be left in a stable condition. All workers to wear hard hats and other PPE. Stop work if anyone enters the risk zone.
BE PREPARED

Many drivers work alone. So, if the worst did happen and you had an accident or were injured, how would you cope? The first thing to do is call for help — so a fully charged mobile phone is essential. Make sure you take it with you whenever you leave your vehicle.

Next, where are you? Many vehicles have GPS tracker systems fitted but you should also know the grid reference of the site and the access point from the public road.

A good risk assessment document will include this information.

These days, all drivers must have first aid training and carry an approved first aid kit. Do you know where to find yours?

Of course, the best way to deal with accidents is to stop them happening in the first place. So, make sure you wear all the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when you leave the cab — that’s hard hat, high-vis vest, safety boots, gloves and eye protection when required. And wear warm clothes — a forest in winter is not a good place to get hurt.
Many accidents have become fatalities because of delays in getting help.
PLAN AHEAD

If possible, it’s also a good idea to work in pairs, or have a simple ‘fail safe’ system in place. That way, if you don’t arrive or call in by an agreed time, someone else can raise the alarm.

IMPROVEMENT TIP

A one-day first aid course is the minimum requirement, and counts towards your CPC, but why not think about adding the ‘F’ module? It deals with specific forestry issues, such as remote working and major injuries.
THE PRE-COMMENCEMENT MEETING

Being prepared isn’t just the responsibility of you, the driver. We recommend that before working on any new site, the haulage contractor and forestry works manager meet to assess all the hazards. Is the site particularly remote or difficult to find? What about mobile phone reception? Simple measures such as directional signage can prevent unnecessary turning, while identifying power cables can save lives. Make sure you have all that information before you start, and if anything’s unclear, ask.

GET PROPER TRAINING

Timber haulage is very different from general road haulage. Make sure you’ve had proper training and are familiar with all the hazards. It’s good practice for all new drivers to be accompanied by a more experienced colleague for the first few trips into the forest.

CHECK YOUR VEHICLE

This is such basic advice that we hesitate to mention it. After all, checking your vehicle is something you will do every single day of your working life — and probably many times during each day too.

However, the forest is likely to throw up some of the most demanding conditions you or your vehicle are ever likely to come across. So, you’ll need to carry out checks even more frequently.
• Check all fluid levels and look under the vehicle for fluid leaks.
• Listen for air leaks from brakes or tyre pressure control systems.
• Check tyres pressures, condition and tread depth.
• Look out for stones or debris between treads or double wheels — they may cause punctures or fly off when you’re on the road.
• Check that all bodywork is secure, and that mud flaps and spray suppression pads are in place.
• Check that your load is secure and that any loose equipment, such as straps or tools, are stowed safely.
• Check all lights are undamaged, clean and work properly.
• Check your windscreen is clean and damage free.
• Check that wipers and washers operate properly.
• Check that steering and brakes are working before moving away.

Remember that daily checks are counted as work. So, make sure your vehicle tachograph is running.
PLAN YOUR ROUTE

Okay, this is fundamental too. But working in forestry areas isn’t like travelling down the M6 — you’re likely to come across many narrow, winding roads and small villages, pedestrians and cyclists.

Plan your journey carefully so you know where you are going (don’t just trust satellite navigation), and take the safest and most economic route. Be aware of height, width and weight restrictions, and check out the ‘agreed routes’ for timber haulage. You can find them here:

http://timbertransportforum.org.uk/maps/agreed-routes

Finally, have a map of the forest so you can safely navigate to the work site and back again if direction markers are not provided.
WATCH YOUR SPEED

It’s a common misconception that lorries drive too fast. The truth is that not only do drivers of large commercial vehicles stick to the speed limit, they drive to the road conditions. For example, even 30mph might be too fast on a narrow, single-track road where visibility is poor.

You will still get complaints, though, so here are a few things we recommend:

• Allow faster moving traffic to pass.
• Avoid travelling in convoys.
• Take special care in towns and villages.
• Try to avoid built-up areas when people are sleeping.

Remember that a heavy load of timber may shift under sharp braking or during an emergency manoeuvre, causing your vehicle to become unbalanced or even tip. Think well ahead!

Frustration causes accidents — allow other vehicles to pass when safe to do so.
For many people in the haulage industry, driving will be the most hazardous activity they ever do. But if you’re a timber haulier, you’ll also find yourself in one of the most hostile industrial environments you could ever imagine.

**TALK ABOUT IT**

When it comes to site safety, forest operators have a lot to think about — from the large harvesting machines and piles of heavy logs to electricity cables and bad weather. However, operators also have a duty to make their sites as safe as possible for visiting vehicles. That includes ensuring clear directional signage, well maintained roads, and safe areas for fuel storage and site equipment.

No one is more aware of these issues and potential hazards than the drivers themselves, so you also have a crucial role to play in site safety by talking to operators, raising any concerns and sharing your experience.

For example, is signage clear enough for hauliers and, importantly, emergency responders? Are forest roads stable enough for the heaviest of vehicles, and can you safely negotiate tight corners and junctions? What about turning areas — are you at risk of hitting fuel tanks, power lines or people?
BE AWARE
There is an alarming number of factors that combine to make the forest one of the most dangerous places you could work.

First of all, consider the weather. Heavy rain, snow and ice can cause driving conditions to deteriorate quickly on unsealed roads, while high winds can bring down trees. You should never be scared to abandon operations if road conditions or weather make life too dangerous — regardless of the pressure on you to deliver timber supplies.

Ground conditions too, can be challenging, especially for 44 tonne articulated vehicles. Watch out for soft verges and hidden ditches, where vehicle damage and even rollovers are all too common.

It’s also really important to remember that while the forest is your place of work, it is a place where others come to relax. You may meet walkers and cyclists who do not expect to see heavy lorries.

Much of it comes down to speed, of course, and 15mph is the maximum on forest roads to ensure safe cornering and stopping. For added safety, make sure you drive with dipped headlights, hazard lights and even roof-mounted beacons if you have them.

UNDERSTAND FOREST OPERATIONS
The felling of trees by the industry’s mechanised harvesters represents a major and obvious hazard to hauliers — especially when these operations are close to the road. However, chainsaw operations, forwarding, winching and stacking logs can all be dangerous to the unwary. Knowing how far you should stay away from these machines and activities (known as the risk zone) is therefore very important.

You will have a risk zone too. If anyone enters it, stop working.
STAY SAFE IN THE FOREST

Harvester

Do not pass under winch ropes unless instructed to do so by operator.

Winch

2 x football pitches to front of harvester head (200m) in case of chain shot
2 x tree lengths + boom length (70m) from machine base

RISK ZONE

2 x tower height (50m)
Chainsaw

2 x tree lengths (50m)

Standing trees

Isolated or exposed standing trees next to the forest road.

2 x tree lengths (50m)
STAY SAFE IN THE FOREST

Forwarder

2 x boom lengths + product (50m)

Timber lorry

2 x boom lengths + product (50m)
STAY CLEAR OF POWER LINES

Electricity is a major cause of death on forest sites — and the risks are increasing as more power lines are run through forests from windfarm and hydro schemes.

All power lines must be identified on site maps and discussed during pre-commencement meetings. You should only ever cross power lines (underground or overhead) where they are marked by ‘goal posts’, signs or tape. And you should never load near power lines or under goalposts.

Remember: goalposts only mark power lines on the work site itself — not necessarily on access roads, and definitely not on public roads. So do not attempt to adjust a load outside the site area, and never, ever drive with the loader arm raised.

MORE INFORMATION

Electricity at Work: Forestry, FISA Guide 804, 2013
LOAD TIMBER SAFELY

Not only is loading timber a dangerous operation, it could also have a major impact on your livelihood — there are hundreds of prosecutions for unsafe loads in the UK every year.

Some safety measures are the responsibility of forest managers. For example, timber stacks must be positioned well away from power lines, felling operations should be a safe distance from loading areas, and standing trees should not be left nearby if they’re at risk of being blown down on top of you.

A good timber stack should always be made and maintained in a safe and stable condition. They should be sited on firm level ground or on bearers and be easily reached from the forest road. “Do not climb on timber stack” signs should be placed near stacks. Stack height should not exceed the product length and you should be able to see over the stack from the loader seat. Where stack heights exceed product length extra precautions should be taken to control public access to stacks e.g. additional signs or mark off with hazard warning tape. The agreed stack height should be included in the site risk assessment.

You should pick up logs methodically from one end leaving the stacks safe and stable for other drivers, forestry workers and the public.

If you think something’s wrong, do not start to load.
SECURE YOUR LOAD

Ensure that the correct number of pins are fitted to secure the load and use two correctly rated straps per bay unless you are sure the bay cannot move (for example, if a full height headboard is fitted, when one strap may be sufficient).

Although you may not be able to safely secure straps as you load between timber stacks, you should do so as soon as possible. Never drive any distance with your load unsecured.

Remember that roundwood should always be loaded along the length of the load bed and never at right angles to the trailer.

Make it easy for the load to be unloaded at its destination by not interlocking bays or bridging bays. Where this is unavoidable, all bays must still be adequately strapped.

The bottom line is that as the driver, you are ultimately responsible for the safety of your load. Checking it’s secure before you set off and regularly during your journey (particularly when you leave uneven forest roads) could prevent serious accidents.

MORE INFORMATION

Safety of Loads on Vehicles, Third edition, Department for Transport

European Best Practice Guidelines on Cargo Securing for Road Transport, European Commission, Directorate-General for Energy and Transport
DO NOT ATTEMPT RECOVERY
If a vehicle becomes stuck, tips or, worse still, rolls over, it’s easy to think that things can’t get any worse. That’s just not true. Too many drivers are still being crushed or suffering serious injuries while trying to recover a vehicle or repair damaged equipment. Even inspecting the damage can be extremely dangerous if the vehicle (or its load) is unstable. Call for help or call a specialist recovery firm but do not attempt recovery yourself. Even if it causes a delay or extra paperwork, it’s simply not worth the risk.
DELIVER SAFELY
Journey’s end... time to relax! Don’t even think about it. Even if ground and weather conditions are usually better, unloading roundwood can be just as challenging as loading it. And there are additional hazards to think about too.

SEE AND BE SEEN
Processing sites are dangerous places, with lots going on and many distractions. You may have left the harvesters and forwarders behind in the forest, but you will still need to be alert to other heavy machines moving around, as well as other lorries, forklifts and pedestrians.

Do not enter a facility without permission from a site official and once inside use dipped headlights and hazard warning lights. Keep to the site speed limit — or no more than 15mph if it’s not specified — and look out for approved pedestrian crossing points.

You’ll become a pedestrian when you leave your cab, so make sure you’re wearing a hard hat, high-vis jacket or vest and steel toe-capped boots. Keep to approved areas and don’t use your mobile phone except in emergency — it’s the number one distraction for accidents.
UNLOAD TIMBER SAFELY
Make your way to the unloading area. There should be a place where you can safely remove straps from the load away from on-site machinery.

If you’re doing the unloading, you’ll be directed to a timber stack or ramp, or you may be required to load directly onto a timber deck. Keep a safe distance from other lorries when unloading and be aware of risk zones — just as you would be in the forest.

Timber decks will have their own fixed loaders for handling logs, so remember to keep a safe distance or stop unloading if they’re in operation.

If your logs are being unloaded by on-site machines, follow their operators’ directions. If you don’t need to help, stay in your cab unless the site has an alternative safe area for drivers.

CLEAN UP
Return to a safe area to clear debris from the trailer. This will prevent branchwood and bark fragments falling onto the road when the trailer is empty, and will help reduce the spread of tree diseases to other forests.

After all the dangerous situations you face getting timber from the forest to its destination, how embarrassing would it be if you were injured at this stage? The reality is that many drivers have suffered serious injuries after falling from trailers while ‘sweeping off’ or removing pins.

Avoid standing on the trailer if you can (especially if it’s the type with no walking boards), and use a long-handled brush from the site gantry if there is one. If you have to stand on the trailer, stay away from the edge and use ladders to get on and off.
FURTHER READING

- **Driving at Work**, HSE, INDG382, 2014


- **European Best Practice Guidelines on Cargo Securing for Road Transport**, European Commission, Directorate-General for Energy and Transport

- **Guidance on Managing Health and Safety in Forestry**, FISA, 2014


  [www.timbertransportforum.org.uk](http://www.timbertransportforum.org.uk)
ABOUT FISA

The Forest Industry Safety Accord was established in 2012 to help reduce the number of serious and fatal accidents in the sector.

Representatives from many of the leading industry organisations signed up to a series of shared commitments to raise the standard of health and safety in their places of work.

A number of working groups were then established - each with a specific area to look at.

The role of the Forest Haulage Working Group is to ensure that, as production increases, forest owners and operators are aware of the need for appropriate standards for the safe loading and movement of timber.

One of the group’s key actions has been to create a safety manual for hauliers. This booklet is the result.

If you would like to find out more about the work of FISA or the Forest Haulage Working Group, or have any feedback about this handbook, please contact us at:

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THINK SAFE. STAY SAFE.
Timber haulage is one of the most dangerous jobs you can do. As a driver, you’ll face enormous challenges every day. This whole handbook is all about keeping you safe. But if you read nothing else, read this:

⚠️ SPEED
Driving too fast is the biggest killer on our roads. If you’re a timber haulier, the risks are increased dramatically by wet and icy conditions and narrow, winding and often unsealed roads.

⚠️ ELECTRICITY
Hitting power lines is a major cause of death on forest sites. Only cross power lines (underground or overhead) where they’re marked, usually by ‘goal posts’, signs or tape - and never load nearby. Watch out for unmarked power lines away from the work site.

⚠️ WORKING ALONE
Minor accidents can turn into serious incidents if you can’t get help. Carry a mobile phone, know the site’s grid reference, and work in pairs or with a ‘fail safe’ back-up system.

⚠️ FALLING TREES
Trees are unpredictable. They can fall unexpectedly during harvesting operations or blow down in heavy winds. Whether you’re in your cab or on foot, keep a safe distance at all times.

⚠️ INSECURE LOADS
Timber that’s not properly secured can shift while you’re driving, causing your vehicle to become unstable or even tip. Worse still, the whole load could shed. Check it and check it again.