



**THINK SAFE
STAY SAFE**



**Tilhill
Forestry**

BSWGROU**P** member of **binderholz** ■

SAFETY AND ASSURANCE BULLETIN

INSIST ON SAFETY

DECEMBER 2024

A tractive issue



It's the end of November and we have had three named storms already. Parts of the country have experienced flooding and the first snows have come and gone.

As autumn turns to winter we generally see sites become wetter. This can have many consequences from increased risk of diffuse pollution, slips and falls and vehicles sliding off forest roads.

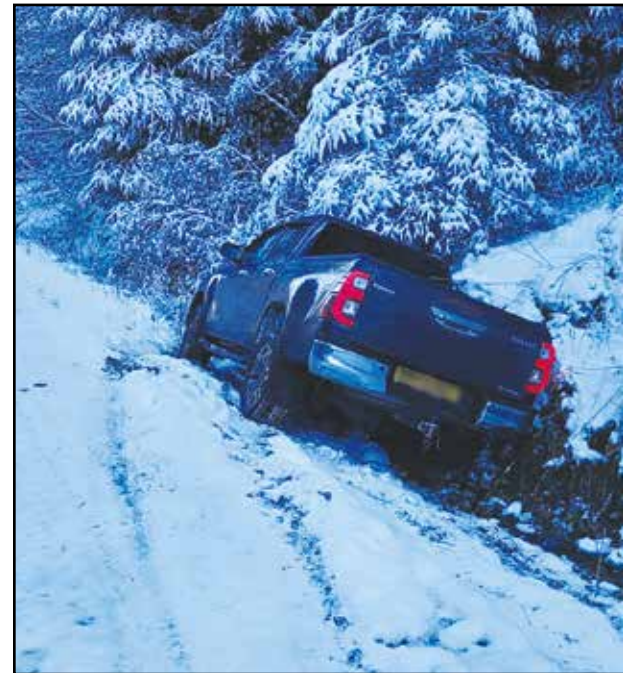
Last month there were three lost time injuries due to slips on our sites. We accept it isn't possible to eliminate the risk of slips in the forest, but we must continue to try to reduce the likelihood of slipping and falling. You might think that is an impossible task, but since we took this mindset some years ago we have seen a significant reduction in lost time injuries.

A study of slip, trip, fall (STF) near miss reports gave clear indication some types of ground prep gave rise to increased risk of STF incidents. We prepared guidance and tool box talks from that information. Tool box talk available on our Contractor Portal for our approved contractors.

Other factors that can help reduce slips on site are boots with suitable grip and

ankle protection, walking poles and crucially situational awareness and trying to be conscious as to foot position on the ground. We encourage everyone to Plant Their Feet

The snowy conditions do bring slippery road conditions. Seasonally this leads to an increase in vehicles sliding off forest roads. Undoubtedly some of these relate to driving at speeds appropriate to the conditions, but also the lack of traction can make recovering a situation where a vehicle is close to the edge of a road more difficult. With so many distractions in our vehicles, and outside if attempting to view a site, stack or operations whilst driving past, it is all too easy to unwittingly veer too close to the edge of the road.



Remember:

- Look ahead where you are walking on site.
- Consider the use of walking poles.
- Check the condition and pattern of grip on your soles.
- Plant Your Feet before putting weight on them.
- Drive to the conditions.
- Don't become distracted whilst driving.

In this edition

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Planters, are you ready?

At face value planting trees might seem like a simple task, but there are many aspects that require knowledge and experience.

With the previous article dealing with planting our feet as we move around site, this article will deal with being ready to plant trees. As the planting season gets underway in earnest it is important to ensure everyone on site has been given an adequate briefing as to the site hazards and constraints and planting requirements.

At face value planting trees might seem like a simple task, but there are many aspects that require knowledge and experience. Tilhill Forestry has a Pre-Planting Briefing sheet that must be gone through with all involved in the planting activity and covers topics such as:

- Point of Work Risk Assessment.
- Pesticides use and pre-treated trees.
- Interpretation and understanding of the planting maps.
- Planting technique and stocking densities.
- Use of machinery and ATVs.
- Correct waste disposal.

On many planting sites quad bikes and ATVs will be used to transport materials across sites. These can be an efficient way to distribute materials and reduce the manual handling of carrying them ourselves.

However, we must make sure of the safety of their operation. This comes down to three things:

1. Safe Site – When we looked at our own history of quad safety most reported incidents involved an overturn. The root cause in some cases was the suitability of the access tracks provided. Recent discussion in the industry has centred on sit-aside machines with ROPS being a safer alternative, but this carries an issue of access tracks not being wide enough to allow their use.

Whatever machine is to be used you need to clarify the answers to the following questions:

- Has the access track been assessed as suitable and safe? It is good practice for the competent machine operator to be part of this assessment.
- When creating new tracks are they being constructed to accommodate sit-aside machines?

2. Safe Machine – Is the quad/ATV designed for forestry use? Has it been maintained in a safe condition? Are operator inspections undertaken and sufficient records kept? Tilhill can supply contractors with check books for both ATV's and quads.

continued



Planters, are you ready? – cont.

3. Safe Operator – A competent operator needs to demonstrate three things:

1. Training and qualification
2. Experience. and
3. Safe practice.

When considering operators of any plant or machinery we must ensure those operating them are competent. The three items above build in stages.

First comes training and then an assessment to show they have reached a known and agreed standard. Alongside this, and post qualification, comes experience, the level of supervision required whilst gaining experience will depend on how far along the route the operator is and the level of competence being displayed.

For a company taking on or letting an operator work on site they must check the former is in place but must still also

check to see the operator is displaying safe practice. Keep a record in site diaries or more formal assessment forms.

Riding an ATV/Quad requires a lot of body movement so do some warm-up stretches to help prevent muscle strain. Gloves are useful for protection and handlebar muffs can help to keep hands warm in cold weather. Wear sturdy, ankle-supporting, footwear that is strong, supportive and has good wet grip. Protect your eyes from insects and branches with either a visor or goggles and **ALWAYS WEAR SUITABLE HEAD PROTECTION.**

Too many people have been killed or injured in incidents involving Quads. According to HSE statistics there have been 14 deaths in Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing involving quads/ATVs between 2017/18 and 2021/22. Proper planning will minimise the risk and prevent further needless loss of life.

Machines must be inspected and maintained to remain in a safe condition to operate.



Remember!

If the ATV/Quad has sat unused for several months, you should give it a thorough inspection before using it again for the first time.

Consider:

- Fuel – old fuel that has been left in fuel tank can become stale, it may need to be refreshed.
- Oil – Check the oil level before each ride, looking at the fluid on the dipstick can tell you how much oil you've got and if it is fit for use.
- Tyres – You must ensure your tyres are at the right pressure for the terrain and have good tread. It's also advisable to check for damage to the sidewalls.
- Brakes – Brake pads should have enough friction material and they should never be metal to metal. Check pad wear and brake operation.
- Steering – Having control of your ATV is essential. The tie rod ends (steering connections to the wheels) are wearable and if one breaks you could be left with just one wheel controlling your ATV.
- Contact Points – Check the handlebar grips. If the grips are falling apart then replace them. Ensure foot pegs are secure and in good order and the seat pad is secure.

Good Call Award



The obscured marker

The October good call award has been presented to Dylan Jones, a harvesting contractor in North Wales. Dylan found markers and a man hole for a water pipe whilst working on site.

He stopped working and reported the findings to his Tilhill Harvesting manager straight away and instigated a 10m buffer. The pipework was not shown on hazards and constraints maps provided by the landowner.

Investigation revealed the pipe had become redundant in 1995, but the markers had remained in situ. As with any utility service we have to presume it to be live until we can prove it isn't.

The markers were well obscured in the middle of the crop and Dylan did well to spot them and acted just as we would wish him to have done. Stop, report, control and assess. Thanks Dylan.



Dylan Jones

In the News Elsewhere

Council fined £500k after man killed by falling tree

A member of the public was walking their dog in a town park when the large limb of a tree fell and struck them. They received multiple injuries and sadly died at the scene.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that when same tree had shed another large limb less than a year before, no investigation was carried out by those responsible to assess whether the tree posed a future safety risk. The council, who controlled the park, did not have a formal overarching tree strategy to manage the risks from trees in public places, and their grounds services contractor had no robust tree management policy. The District Judge sentenced both at Court and said that the previous incident should have "acted as a wake-up call".

Organisations who are responsible for trees in areas regularly used by members of the public often adopt a concept called "zoning", where trees are prioritised for proactive checks based on frequency of public access.

The Council pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. They were fined £500,000 and ordered to pay £7,284 costs. There was no separate penalty for grounds services company, who also pleaded guilty to breaching 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. They were ordered to pay

a nominal fine of £500. In passing his sentence, the District Judge said it would have been disproportionate to impose fines on both.

HSE Inspector said: "This was an utterly tragic event that has caused the death of a much-loved husband and father. Had this public area been better managed, this death might have been avoided. No lessons were learned from the limb falling off the tree less than a year before. There was no overarching, consistent risk identification process leading to zoning of trees in all frequently accessed public areas."



Christmas Mental Health

Get support

If you're struggling this Christmas, you may want to find support for your mental health. There are a few ways that you can do this:

Call **Samaritans** on **116 123** (freephone). They're always open. They have a Welsh language line too.

Text **SHOUT** to **85258**. This is a free 24/7 crisis text service run by Shout.

I'm sure many of us are looking forward to the Christmas period.

It is a time to take a break from work, relax and spend time with family and friends. With most people doing the same the dread of coming back to a full inbox after time off is removed, only enhancing the break away from work. However, Christmas is also a time many people find difficult.

To help you this Christmas see our 12 Tips of Christmas below:

1. Plan ahead

Avoid unnecessary stress over the festive season by planning as much as possible in the run up to Christmas and being careful not to take on too much. You're not being selfish by saying "no" to some things or asking for some help. For example, if you're hosting Christmas dinner, could you ask some of your guests to bring a starter or dessert?

2. Make time for you

At Christmas it can be all too easy to get swept up into other people's ideas of fun. It's important to make sure that you do something you want as well – this is your holiday too! If you know this will be hard, try booking something in advance or setting a free day or two aside just for you.

3. Avoid comparisons

If you do decide to use social media over the festive season, avoid comparing your experience to those of your friends. Remember that most people only share the best bits of their lives online and you don't know what's going on behind the smiling selfies and prezzie pics!

4. Pace yourself

Give yourself time to relax over the Christmas period – don't be afraid to take time out to go for a walk, listen to music or have a nap if you need it.

5. Get outside

Going for a wintery walk can be the perfect way to get some fresh air and exercise along with a change of place. Being in the same house for too long can get a bit intense, so a change of scenery will do everyone good!

6. Try to eat healthily

While it's normal to overindulge a bit over Christmas, try to keep your diet as balanced as possible with lots of fruit and vegetables. This will help you to avoid energy lows that can have an effect on your mood.

7. Alcohol in moderation

While a bit of alcohol can make you feel relaxed, don't forget that drinking too much can leave you feeling irritable and low. Alcohol can also play a big part in arguments and disagreements, so it's sensible to drink in moderation and, of course, don't drink and drive.

8. Get enough sleep

Feeling sleepy can also leave you feeling low, so try to keep to regular sleep patterns as much as possible over the Christmas period.

9. Talk to someone

If you're worried about Christmas or feel overwhelmed or under pressure, don't be afraid to talk to someone about it. Have a chat to someone you trust.

10. Keep active

Exercise can be great for mental health and there are still ways to keep it up over Christmas! Have a boogie to some festive classics or head outside for a walk in the fresh air. If you have a white Christmas, you could even get some people together for a snowball fight or go sledging!

11. Christmas alone

If you're spending Christmas alone, have a think about what you want to do beforehand. You may decide to curl up with a favourite movie, book yourself a getaway or arrange to go to a lunch.

12. Volunteer

It's no secret – giving something back can help you feel good about yourself and there's no more perfect time to volunteer than around Christmas.

Head to [Doit – turn business impact into social impact](#) to check out current opportunities. There's even the option to volunteer from home too!

December 2024 – 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, sustainability, and/or environmental matters:

I have been briefed by: _____ My Tilhill Office is: _____

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

Signed: _____	Name: _____	Date: _____
Signed: _____	Name: _____	Date: _____
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Signed: _____	Name: _____	Date: _____

ORIGINAL sheet to be held at the Tilhill Office.

Send a **COPY** to: Head of Safety, Tilhill, The Gatehouse, Ruck Lane, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 8EA. Fax: 01892 860441. Email: ios@tilhill.com

Contractors: If you would like your own copy of this Safety & Assurance Bulletin please contact your local office and ask to be included on the mailing list.