



*"Improving industry's capacity to develop and maintain a skilled workforce"*

## FOREST OPERATOR LICENSING SYSTEM

### **Background**

Since 1982 the Tasmanian Forest Industries Training Board (TFITB), under various previous titles, has been responsible for providing accreditation to operators within the forest harvesting industry. From 1989 this licensing was supported by Workplace Standards Tasmania (also under various previous titles) by inclusion in the *Industrial Safety, Health and Welfare (Forest Industry) Regulations (1990)* until their repeal on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1999. The Forest Operation Assessment and Licensing Scheme has since been gazetted by the Director of Workplace Standards Tasmania from 28<sup>th</sup> April 2004. The TFITB played a major role in lifting safety standards in this industry over this time.

In 2010 the TFITB gifted the Licensing System to ForestWorks Ltd, a national learning and skills development organisation. The operation has not changed – just the name.

ForestWorks Tasmania currently has over 14,000 operators (8,500 of these in the forest industries) on its database. This database is managed on behalf of the industry and free print-outs are made available to employers, trainers and Government departments, on request, to assist them to manage personal development, audits and duty of care.

### **Purpose**

The Forest Operator Assessment and Licensing Scheme was put in place by the industry to reduce the incidence of death or serious injury in the Tasmanian forest industries. It is also used by employers to provide evidence that their employees are trained to the appropriate standard in accordance with Section 9 (1) (c) of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* and to monitor the performance of their business against Section 9 (2) (d), (e), (f) and (g) of the Act.

### **Forest Industry Tasks Covered**

Licenses issued to operators by ForestWorks cover a range of tasks in the forest industries as well as tasks related to forest operations, such as quarrying and road-making, and some sawmill skills. For ease of understanding, the categories used on these licenses are related to individual items of equipment or skill. The attached list of categories used on the licenses indicates the tasks that are covered. (*See Appendix A*)

A number of other industries (and the Northern Territory Administration) have recognised the ForestWorks licensing scheme as best practice and insist on their operators holding a TFITB/ForestWorks licence.

## **Certification Standards**

All assessments conducted by ForestWorks Tasmania assessors are, as a minimum, to the national guidelines approved by the Australian National Training Authority where these are available. In other instances state consultative committees have been used to draw up the standards for certification.

When new National Competency Standards are endorsed, ForestWorks Tasmania update all assessment instruments to ensure that licenses issued in Tasmania reflect competency at least to the relevant National Competency Standard.

ForestWorks is continually looking at ways to “raise the bar” on safety, quality and environment issues. This can mean that, as well as proving their competency in forest work tasks, the forest operator is required to prove pre-requisite skills in OH&S, Product Care and Forest Practices.

## **Trainer and Assessor Accreditation Standards**

The organisation has always set a very high standard for the trainers and assessors that it has accredited. When a new trainer/assessor is accredited by ForestWorks they are required to conduct an assessment in conjunction with another, experienced assessor to ensure that standardisation of assessments occur. The performance of all trainers/assessors is monitored by ForestWorks as assessments are received and processed – ensuring that assessments are being conducted to the recognised standards. Annual meetings of all trainers/assessors are conducted to discuss issues of common concern and to ensure that moderation and validation of assessments is maintained.

Accredited trainers/assessors are required to complete the standard theory and practical assessment papers for each applicant they assess and forward them to the licensing office for processing and filing. In addition, a personal diary of all training and assessments undertaken must be maintained.

All trainers/assessors (currently numbering around 37) are accredited by ForestWorks Tasmania for a period of one year and, if not considered to be performing to an acceptable standard or they have not conducted assessments in the previous 12 months, their accreditation is not renewed. It is also possible for ForestWorks Tasmania to withdraw or amend an assessor’s accreditation if they are found to be assessing to a standard unacceptable to ForestWorks Tasmania. These decisions are made by the Accreditation Issues Committee; which includes representation from both ForestWorks Tasmania and assessors.

## **Administrative Systems**

ForestWorks Tasmania has a tight administrative regime in place to ensure the accuracy and integrity of its records. A manual covering all internal procedures details procedures for registration of a new operator, updating of certification, renewal of registration upon expiry, withdrawal of accreditation and management of the database.

A “DATAFILE” file management system is used for the retention of assessment records. These are accessed by Workplace Standards Tasmania inspectors or the Coroner’s Court in the event of an accident.

## **Issuance of Licenses**

The Administrator of ForestWorks Tasmania Licensing System is the only person able to approve the issuance of a forest operator licence or the addition of further licence endorsements. The Administrator auspices every assessment and makes the decision as to whether competency has been proven based on the evidence presented.

Provisional licenses (for competent but inexperienced operators) are issued with an expiry date 12 months from the month of assessment. Full licenses are issued for 3 years and must be renewed at the end of that time; either by completion of a re-registration form signed by the operator's employer or a re-assessment.

A full record of all licence endorsements is retained on an Access database. The database allows a record search under the name of the employer and this facility is used extensively by forest harvesting contractors as a tool for auditing the skills of their workforce.

## **Suspension of Operators**

If an operator is found to be operating unsafely or below industry standards, that operator's registration with ForestWorks Tasmania is suspended until such time as they have successfully undertaken re-training and assessment. This is usually undertaken at the request of Workplace Standards Tasmania or sometimes the operator's employer. In such circumstances the suspension is noted on the database and a letter is sent to the operator informing them that ForestWorks Tasmania has withdrawn their endorsements and that re-assessment is required. The operator is also requested to return their licence to the office of ForestWorks Tasmania.

## **Issues Resolution**

Where an operator is unhappy with any decision made regarding their licence they have the right to appeal to. There is then a dispute resolution process in place.

In addition, ForestWorks Tasmania maintains an "open door policy" allowing industry participants (assessors, employers, operators, WST) to raise issues of concern with the administration at any time.

## **Review**

ForestWorks Tasmania is regularly in communication with key players within the forest industries sectors to ensure that competency standards and safety standards are maintained at the highest possible level. The annual trainer/assessors meetings (mentioned previously) give opportunity for assessors working in the field to voice concerns and opinions in relation to training and safety issues.

Where it is drawn to our attention that the competency standards in use do not adequately cover the safe operation of equipment there are processes which allow for change to occur. The national competency standards are reviewed regularly and it is then possible to submit a proposal for changes to be made to these standards.

Alternatively, the Accreditation Issues Committee can recommend changes to the assessment instruments to ForestWorks. This can be done very quickly in reaction to:

- matters that may be raised during a Coronial Inquest;
- industry accident trends identified by WST, or
- findings of the Safety Standards Committee of ForestWorks Tasmania.

As ForestWorks Tasmania is already assessing operators to above the national competency standard it is very easy for us to modify our assessment papers to set higher standards on safety issues without the need to have the national standard altered. ForestWorks Tasmania has also been given responsibility by industry to manage a number of Codes of Practice. It is consequently well placed to integrate changes to the Codes into training and assessment.

### **Management**

ForestWorks Tasmania provide advice to the industry and Government on industry training issues and to promote Learning and Skills development and safety and quality for the industry.

A consistent standard of accreditation for all operators in Tasmania's forest industry is supported by all peak organisations and major employers in the state. In addition to these organisations the work done by ForestWorks Tasmania in maintaining a database of industry skills is supported by a large number of individual enterprises and industry committees.

Please contact the Licensing Standards Officer if you require further information on 03 6331 6077 or 0418 133 763.

## Appendix A

### FORESTWORKS TASMANIA INDUSTRY COMPETENCY STANDARDS

#### Dozer

- Dozer / logging
- Dozer / land clearing
- Dozer / earthworks
- Dozer / roading
- Dozer / chip pile
- Dozer / quarrying

#### Traxcavator

#### Skidder

#### Skid Steer

#### Road Roller

#### Excavator

- Excavator / earthworks
- Excavator / harvesting
- Excavator / roading
- Excavator / mill work only
- Excavator / log loading
- Excavator / no loading
- Excavator / land clearing
- Excavator / stationary
- Excavator (unrestricted)
- Knuckleboom loader

#### Fulghum

- Fulghum log handler

#### Loader

- Wheel loader
- Loader / earthworks
- Front end loader
- Loader / mill work (unloading & stockpiling)

#### Fire Safety

- Fire Weather Evaluation
- Bush Fire Awareness
- Wildfire Suppression

#### Mechanical Harvesting

- Mechanical Faller / native forests
- Mechanical Faller / plantation
- Mechanical Processor
- Mechanical Forwarder

#### Grader

- Grader / forest operations
- Grader / roading

#### Cable Logging

- Chokerman
- Chaser
- Rigging Slinger
- Hook Tender
- Yarder

#### Chainsaw

- Chainsaw (forest harvesting)
- Chainsaw (non forest harvesting)

#### Tree Faller

- Faller Harvesting Advanced
- Faller (non forest harvesting) Advanced
- Faller Harvesting Intermediate
- Faller (non forest harvesting) Intermediate

#### Underpinning Knowledge

- Machine familiarisation
- Forest Practices Code
- Log Grading / Product care