WOODLOT LOGGING CONTRACTORS -

A North Island Survey

Janelle Byers
Human Factors Researcher
LIRO

(Paper presented by Richard Parker, Human Factors Researcher, LIRO)

This paper is intended as a discussion paper, a full analysis of the questionnaire will be published as a LIRO Project Report.

In 1995, the New Zealand Forest Owners' Association (NZFOA) estimated that 24% of the forest estate was owned by 'others' mostly small forest owners with less than 50 hectares in forest (NZFOA, 1996). The Ministry of Forestry (MOF) state that if the current trend of the establishment of small forests (predominantly farm forests) continues, that in the next 10-20 years small forests could account for half of the country's total forest area, a significant proportion of the wood for sale (Ministry of Forestry, 1994). Much of the harvesting of woodlots tends to be carried out by loggers outside of the major forest companies.

At the current time many of these woodlot contractors supply wood to the large forest companies, and under an arrangement such as this, the forest company has some responsibility under the Health and Safety in Employment Act (1992). At the current time very little is known about the woodlot contract workforce, and given the increasing amount of wood they will be harvesting in the future, and the responsibilities of principals under the HSE Act (1992), it is timely to gather some information on the woodlot contract workforce.

The overall aim of this study was to determine the demographic characteristics of the woodlot logging contractor, in particular to quantify current health, safety, training and turnover levels, and industry awareness.

Methodology

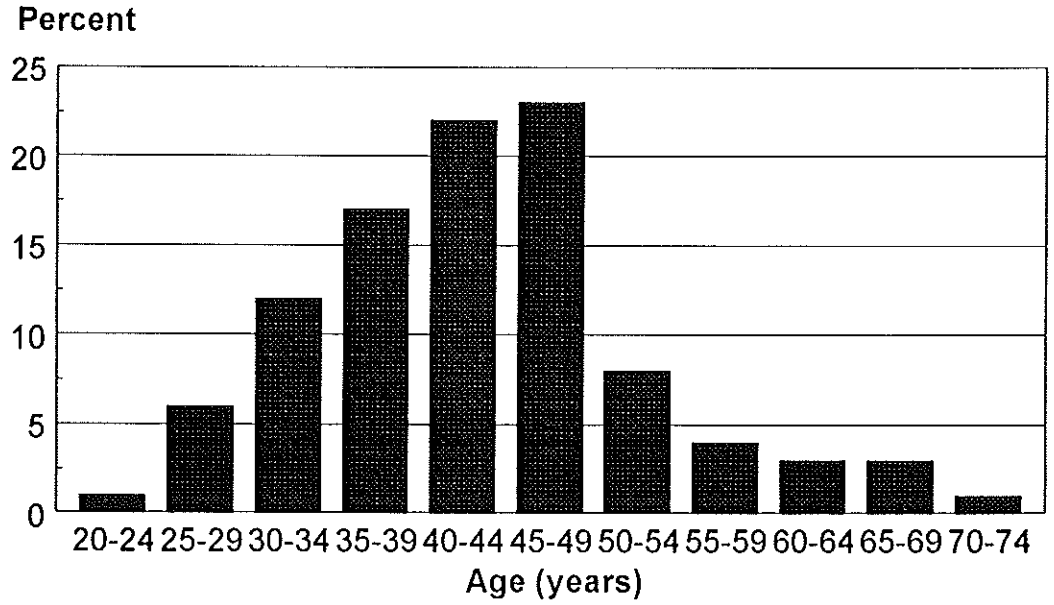
In order to gain a comprehensive overview of the woodlot contractors, and to limit the study to a manageable size only woodlot crews in the North Island were surveyed. The information for this survey was collected by personal interview using a standardised questionnaire. A similar questionnaire format to previous workforce surveys was used in order to facilitate comparisons with the corporate logging workforce.

A total of 102 contractors completed the questionnaire. The area surveyed included most of the North Island from the Far North to Masterton, and from Hawkes Bay and Gisborne to Taranaki.

RESULTS

102 valid questionnaires were analysed. The results from this survey have been compared with the results from previous LIRO surveys of the logging workforce in Otago/Southland (Byers and Adams, 1995), the New Zealand Forest Owners Survey (Byers, 1995) and the Logging Workforce Survey covering Northland, Bay of Plenty and

Figure One: Age of Woodlot logging Contractors



Otago Southland (Gaskin, Smith and Wilson, 1989).

Demographics

The average age for these contractors (all of whom were male) was 42.8 years (range 24-70 years). These woodlot contractors had a higher average age than that found in other LIRO workforce surveys, mainly because in previous surveys both the contractors and their crews were surveyed. Therefore it is not possible to directly compare many of the results achieved in this survey of woodlot logging contractors with results gained from other LIRO workforce surveys.

The woodlot logging contractors were predominantly European, only 9% identified themselves as Maori. Most contractors surveyed (68%) were married, and 69% had at least one dependent. Fifty nine percent had two or more dependents. Over half of these contractors lived in rural areas (51%), few lived in cities (9%).

Education

All of the logging contractors had completed some secondary schooling (table 5). Only 23% had completed more than three years secondary schooling, and 34% had gained a formal school qualification before leaving school (Table 6).

Most contractors had not completed any post-school education. Of these who had, the most common training was of a technical nature (35%), this was often a polytechnic course in a wide range of areas from engineering to horticulture. Five percent of these logging contractors had completed some University study.

Table 1: Formal School Qualifications

School qualifications	%
None	66
School Cert.	22
U.E./6th form cert.	10
H.S.C./Bursary	2

Turnover

The contractors were asked how many other crews they had worked for. Thirty five percent of the contractors had not worked for any other crews, and 39% had worked for one or two other crews. This is an aspect of the careers of woodlot contractors which appears to differ markedly from corporate contractors, who would be expected would have worked for more than two crews before beginning contracting.

Almost half (45%) of the contractors had worked for a corporate crew at some stage in their career. Most (42) had worked in logging, and ten had worked in silvicultural crews. Six contractors had worked in both corporate logging and silvicultural crews.

Table 2: Have you worked for a corporate crew?

Worked for corporate?	%
Yes	45
No	53
No reply	2

The average length of time spent by these contractors in a corporate logging crew was 6.4 years (range 0.5 - 20), while the average time spent in a corporate silvicultural crew was 3.8 years (range 0.25 - 14).

We asked the contractors if they thought they would still be in woodlot logging in five years time, 72% said that yes, they would like to be in woodlot logging in five years time, 28% said that they hoped to be doing something else.

Accident Record

Fifteen percent of woodlot contractors had a lost time injury in the last 5 years. One contractor had been injured twice in that time. Because of four very severe injuries the average time off was 17 days. However, the most common period off work was 5 days.

Twenty-five percent of woodlot crews had at least one LTI in the last 12 months. One crew had three LTIs. Overall these injuries resulted in a total of 295 days lost and an average of 11 days off work. This does not differ significantly from the logging Accident Reporting Scheme which reported an average of 10.1 and 9.2 days lost per injury in 1994 and 1995 respectively.

Table 3: Accident Record

Days lost %	Contractor	Crew
1 to 5	40	48
6 to 10	15	28
11 to 15	20	4
16 to 20	0	0
21+	25	20

Almost half (43%) of woodlot contractors reported some back problems. This proportion is similar to that found by Gaskin, Smith & Wilson (1989). Back injury is not unexpected considering the heavy physical nature of logging. Twenty-two percent of contractors suffered from white finger, again similar to the proportion reported by Gaskin, Smith & Wilson (1989).

For the first time the incidence of melanoma was investigated. Eleven percent of contractors had had a mole removed. This is of concern, and is an area of occupational health which we know little about in the logging industry.

TRAINING AND FIRS MODULES

Most contractors (87%) had heard of FIRS module, however only 31 contractors (30%) had a FIRS module. This may suggest that these contractors had difficulties accessing the FIRS system, or that they chose not to pursue the modules for other reasons.

When the contractors were asked 'Do you have any Loggers Certificates which haven't been changed over to the FIRS system?" Sixteen percent said that they held old Loggers Certificates which had not been transferred to the FIRS system.

We then asked the contractors how often they had seen a trainer in the last twelve months, and how often they would like to see a trainer. As shown on Table 4 57% of contractors hadn't seen a trainer in the last twelve months. Twenty percent had seen a trainer once or twice in this time. When asked how often they would like to see at trainer, the biggest proportion of contractors said that monthly or on an as needed basis would be the best option for them.

This suggest that the contractors are keen to acquire training, most of them had heard of FIRS modules, but because they rarely saw a trainer, it is unsurprising that so few of them had any modules.

Table 4: How often have you seen a trainer in the last 12 months?

	How often have you seen a trainer in the last 12 months?	How often would you like to see a trainer?
0	57	2
1	14	1
2	8	8
3	5	3
4	4	8
5	1	-
6	5	11
7	-	-
8	-	-
9	-	-
10	1	-
11	-	-
12	2	31
fortnightly	-	5
weekly	-	2
trainer in crew	1	-
when needed	-	19
no answer	2	10

SAFETY

The contractors were asked who identified hazards on their worksite.

Table 5: Identification of Hazards

Who identifies the hazards?	%
Team	46
Contractor	46
Foreman	6
No-one	1
No reply	1

There was an even split between the entire crew identifying the hazards and the contractor alone identifying the hazards. Fortunately only one contractor said that no-one identified the hazards in his worksite. Sixty four percent of the contractors said that they were aware of their obligation to notify OSH when beginning work on a new site. Sixty five percent of contractors said that they had an accident register.

All of the contractors had heard of the HSE Act. Eighty seven percent of the contractors said that they understood their responsibilities under the HSE Act, 5% said that they didn't, and 8% were unsure of their responsibilities. When asked if the crew had its own safety plan, 74% of the contractors said yes, 26% said no.

Table 6: Frequency of Safety Meetings

Frequency of Safety Meetings	%
When needed	25
Monthly	19
Weekly	16
Starting a new block	10
Fortnightly	9
Daily	8

However 84% of contractors said that they had regular safety meetings with their crews, so some crews without safety plans still had regular safety meetings. When asked how often they had these safety meetings, (13 didn't reply).

The most common reply was that safety meetings were held when they were needed, several contractors commented that in some blocks, they would have a meeting about most trees to discuss the safest way to fell each particular tree.

All but two of the contractors were aware of OSH, and the functions of OSH. Seventy seven percent said that they had seen an OSH publication, in view of the fact that the Safety Code for Forest Operations - Part 3 - Logging is an OSH publication, this result is potentially alarming.

The contractors were asked how many times have you seen OSH in the last 12 months on your worksite? Table 7 shows that 41% of the contractors hadn't seen an OSH inspector in the last 12 months, despite the fact the 64% of the contractors had told OSH where they were working.

Table 7: Number of times contractors had seen OSH inspectors.

Number of Times seen an OSH inspector	%
0	41
1	21
2	20
3	9
4	3
5-9	4
10>	2

ENVIRONMENTAL

The next section of the questionnaire asked the contractors about resource consents and related issues. Eighty nine percent of the contractors said that they knew what a resource consent was, 3% did not know, 7% were unsure, (1% did not answer). As table 8 shows in most cases the forest owner obtained the resource consent. This question referred to the last woodlot harvested by the contractor, 17% of the contractors said that the last block they logged did not require a resource consent.

Table 8 : Who Obtained the Resource Consent?

Who obtained the consent?	%
Owner	24
Company	20
Contractor	19
Consent not needed	17
Consultant	11
Don't know	5
No reply	4

Half (50%) of the contractors said that their last job had been inspected for compliance to the resource consent. In most instances the council (40%) completed the inspection.

REFERENCES

Byers, J. (1995) Forestry Workforce Census 1994. LIRO Project Report No 57.

Byers, J and D. Adams (1995) Otago Southland Forest Workforce - Five Years Later LIRO Project Report No 58.

Gaskin, J., Smith, B., and P. Wilson (1989): "The New Zealand Logging Worker - A Profile", LIRA Project Report 44.