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Forest Industry Preparing for Back to Work

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Forest industry organisations are planning how to get back to work when restrictions on non-essential work are lifted for the industry.

Organisations, representing forest growers, transport, processing and contractors have set up a working group to develop risk assessment protocols in readiness for start-up of the industry sector.

The National Safety Director of the Forest Industry Safety Council, Fiona Ewing says the aim is to assure government that the sector will be able to comply with the epidemic management conditions of COVID-19.

“The priority and starting point is health and wellbeing.

“There is the complex technical side of start-ups that will be a ‘whole of industry’ scan of the value chain. That starts in the forest and moves through transport, processing and export through to the work at the ports. The group will be working with our stakeholders to get the start-up protocol proposal right.”

Fiona Ewing says the forest industry had accepted the government decision two weeks ago that forestry was a non-essential service provider.

“However, we now have clear guidelines on MPI approved safe practices from other parts of the primary sector that we are working to adapt.”

These protocols will provide the guidelines and will still require companies and individuals to adopt safe practices specific to their sector groups says Fiona Ewing.

“Our intention is to take the start-up protocol proposal directly to decision makers in MPI and Forestry Minister Shane Jones, so that the government is fully aware of the industry led recovery plan to re-activate the industry.”

Already there is also a fast growing call from New Zealand’s international customers to provide wood-based products that are deemed essential in their own countries.

“We need to act on this now. Even though the industry shut down in two days when lock down was announced, it will take much longer to get the forestry supply chain organised and moving again and advance planning will ensure a safe and successful restart.”

Source: <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU2004/S00092/forest-industry-preparing-for-back-to-work.htm>