



Welcome to the fourth edition of *Arb News*, a newsletter to help keep you up to date with health and safety news for your industry.

## Introducing the Arboriculture and Forestry Advisory Group (AFAG)

AFAG is an advisory group of the Health and Safety Commission's (HSC's) Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee (AIAC) and meets twice a year. Several project groups have been set up to tackle specific issues. AFAG members come from the industry, HSE and the Trade Unions. The main committee role is to consider and make recommendations to AIAC and HSC on:

- identifying and controlling all major areas of risk to health and safety arising from work activities in forestry, arboriculture and the transport of timber in the forest;
- implementing the HSC strategy for workplace health and safety in Great Britain to 2010 and beyond; and
- helping achieve the targets set by Government to reduce injuries, ill health and days lost due in particular to:
  - falls from height;
  - musculoskeletal disorders;
  - hand-arm and whole-body vibration;
  - noise;
  - workplace transport;
  - exposure to pesticides.

Organisations that are currently represented on AFAG include: the Arboricultural Association (AA), the Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA), DANI Forest service, the Forestry Commission (FC), the Forestry and Timber Association (FTA), the Forestry Contracting Association (FCA), the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF), Lantra Awards, Local Government, the National Association of Tree Officers (NATO), the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) and the United Kingdom Forest Products Association (UKFPA).

AFAG has recently agreed its work plan for the coming year and has set up working groups to progress the following topics:

### **Examination of underlying and root causes of serious accidents – Developing strategies for risk reduction**

- Examine underlying and root causes of serious accidents over the past five years to identify cultural and behavioural implications and strategies for reduction of risk.
- Training and certification, including:
  - review of training schemes and Certificates of Competence;
  - mapping of European standards of training and competence of machine operators;
  - refresher training and re-certification.

## Recent HSE publications

*Noise at work: Guidance for employers on the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005* Leaflet INDG362(rev1)  
[hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg362.pdf](http://hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg362.pdf)

*Protect your hearing or lose it! Pocket card* INDG363(rev1)  
[hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg363.pdf](http://hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg363.pdf)

*Control the risks from hand-arm vibration: Advice for employers on the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005* Leaflet INDG175(rev2)  
[hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg175.pdf](http://hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg175.pdf)

*Hand-arm vibration: Advice for employees* Pocket card INDG296(rev1)  
[hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg296.pdf](http://hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg296.pdf)

### Operational best practice – Improving and maintaining standards

- Identify and promulgate precautions for machines working on steep slopes.
- Improve management of work at height, including implementation of the Work at Height Regulations.
- Examine the feasibility of welfare provision on forestry work sites.
- Rigging and dismantling techniques in arboriculture.
- Machine-assisted takedown of trees.
- Chainsaw personal protective equipment (PPE) – to improve and promote standards and related issues, for example VAT on PPE such as chainsaw trousers.
- Market surveillance (product design).

### Occupational health – Improving and developing strategies for risk reduction

- Promote rehabilitation services.
- Identify the prevalence and causes of musculoskeletal disorders and develop strategies for risk reduction.
- Reduce operator exposure to hand-arm vibration, whole-body vibration and noise.
- Reduce exposure to pesticides used in tree planting.

### Communication – Promoting best practice and maximising the potential for change

- Promote arboricultural best practice among key client groups.
- Produce, review and maintain AFAG, HSE and industry guidance.

Progress on these working groups will be reported back to the main AFAG meeting. Minutes of these meetings are available on the HSE website at:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/hsc/iacs/aiac/afag.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/hsc/iacs/aiac/afag.htm).

## Appointing arboricultural contractors

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Since October 2003 HSE, in conjunction with the Arboricultural Association, has run a series of ten very successful safety and health awareness days (SHADs) for organisations who appoint arboricultural contractors. These Awareness Days highlight the crucial role that clients have in driving up health and safety standards in arboriculture. They provide an update on new legislation, guidance and technical issues and site advice to help ensure clients employ competent contractors. They are aimed at a wide variety of organisations and previous attendees have included representatives from local authorities (LAs), housing associations, construction companies, NHS trusts, Network Rail, landscapers, the Highways Agency, utility companies, universities and colleges, charitable organisations, the Forestry Commission and land agents.

The next SHAD is to be held at Shuttleworth College, Bedfordshire on 16 May 2006. The invitation to this event extends to London-based LAs and other organisations. It is intended to hold three more of these events this year. Details will be available from the AA website: [www.trees.org.uk](http://www.trees.org.uk).

# Toxicodendron Vernicifluum

A recently published alert notice on the hazards of working with this unusual tree follows for information. The notice was produced by Landscape Planning Group Ltd.

## ALERT NOTICE



### Varnish Tree (Toxicodendron Vernicifluum syn. Rhus Verniciflua & Rhus Vernicifera)

#### **A major cause for concern?**

Although a tree that is rarely encountered it is extremely phototoxic, causing severe dermatitis, and skin loss from contact with any of its parts.

Once a person has been affected the reaction can last several months and the individual can be in constant pain. It is possible that once someone has become sensitive to this plant by prior contact, they can even have a severe reaction from simply being near furniture that has been treated with the varnish from the tree, even if the varnish was applied tens of years previously.

#### **Identification features**

Shoot very stout, pale grey, freckled orange-brown, rough. Bud like a nut of Sweet Chestnut, stout, ovoid, shiny brown, terminal bud beaked. Leaf alternate, odd-pinnate, 50-80 cm long, basal 25 cm yellow and scarlet rachis free of leaflets, 7-19 leaflets, terminal leaflet largest to 20 cm x 10 cm, other leaflets 17 cm x 6 cm sub-opposite, on petioles 0.5 cm: oblique at base, curly long-acuminate, entire, leathery, glossy bright green, darkening; lax, hanging at various angles; crushed gives faint balsam scent (**Do not do this**). Bark is dark grey with black diamonds joining to form vertical fissures; on older trees flaking in curved patterns.

#### **Similar species in leaf**

Tree of Heaven, Chinese Cedar, Caucasian Wingnut (has two terminal leaflets), Butternut, Mockernut.

#### **Similar species out of leaf**

At a distance could be mistaken for several species which have thick twigs and large buds.

#### **Handling and disposal**

This tree should not be handled without full PPE similar to that used for Giant Hogweed. The leaves, branches, trunk and root must not be burnt or left in any unsecured area.

# Meet HSE

If you have any health and safety concerns that you would like to discuss with HSE we will be represented at the following events:

## **The Arboricultural Society's Arborists Trade Fair**

Bathurst Estate, Cirencester, Gloucestershire  
23-24 June 2006

## **IOG Saltex**

Windsor Race Course  
5-7 September 2006

## **APF International Forest Machinery Exhibition**

Ragley Hall, Alcester, Warwickshire  
21-23 September 2006

As well as HSE inspectors attending the event at Ragley Hall, it is hoped to run a seminar to discuss the work of AFAG and members of AFAG will be available at certain times on the HSE stand (details to be confirmed).

# Revised guidance

The following HSE guidance has recently been revised:

## **AIS30 LOLER: How the Regulations apply to arboriculture**

AIS30 has been revised to take into account the new Work At Height Regulations 2005.

Available on the HSE website at: [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais30.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais30.pdf)

## **INDG317 Chainsaws at work**

In response to requests from the industry made to AFAG, INDG317 has been revised to include:

- additional guidance on supervision of trainees at training courses and training at work (originally in GS48); and
- the following new advice on the wearing of gloves – 'The use of appropriate gloves is recommended under most circumstances. The type of glove will depend on risk assessment of the task and machine. Consider the need for protection from cuts from the chainsaw, thorny material and cold/wet conditions'.

Available on the HSE website at: [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg317.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg317.pdf)

# Further information

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 Website: [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk) (HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops and free leaflets can be downloaded from HSE's website: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).)

For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055 Fax: 0845 408 9566 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: [hse.infoline@natbrit.com](mailto:hse.infoline@natbrit.com) or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.

# Your views

What do you think of *Arb News*? What would you like to see in future editions? If you have any issues or concerns you would like to share with AFAG, HSE and the industry please let us know.

Send your views to Frances Hirst at the address below.

**To receive this newsletter by e-mail in future please send your e-mail address to:**

[arbnews.admin@hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:arbnews.admin@hse.gsi.gov.uk)

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