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Disappointing D&A testing

By Wenita CEO David Cormack

We had a bad start to our drug and alcohol testing results this year, with five positives so far (all from silviculture crews) and three in April alone. Last year we had just six for the entire year.

It's extremely dangerous to come to work with any sort of drug or alcohol induced impairment. It's hazardous not just for the impaired person, but also for their workmates – it is pretty selfish. Remember we're not testing to catch people out; we're doing it to make our workplace safer.

Everyone deserves a second chance, so those who do test positive are offered a place on a rehabilitation programme and managed back to work once they produce a negative test result.

Please remember to notify your crew boss if you're taking prescription medicines. It'll save a lot of hassle and embarrassment when they show up in your next drug test.

To discourage people from coming to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol, Wenita is investigating suitable education/counselling sessions for our crews and we're going to drug and alcohol test more frequently.

Please talk to your crew boss or a Wenita staff member if you have any questions about the drug testing programme. (See graphs on page 3.)

Work accidents

On a more positive note, we've had just one LTI (lost-time injury) so far this year. We want to get to the end of the year without adding to the tally. Near-hit reports seem to be very low this year. Remember to report all near hits so

others can learn from those mistakes. Sometimes near hits provide better learning opportunities than the injury-related incidents. (See story on page 2.)

Training

- SafeTree Contractor Certification - assessor Rob Prebble is coming in June to audit our logging crews and hopefully some of the silviculture crews as well. About 10 forestry organisations have already achieved certified contractor status. See the full list of certified contractors on the Safetree website (<http://www.safetree.co.nz>).

- Certified tree fallers - two of our certified tree fallers have already been recertified and the other two are working through the process.

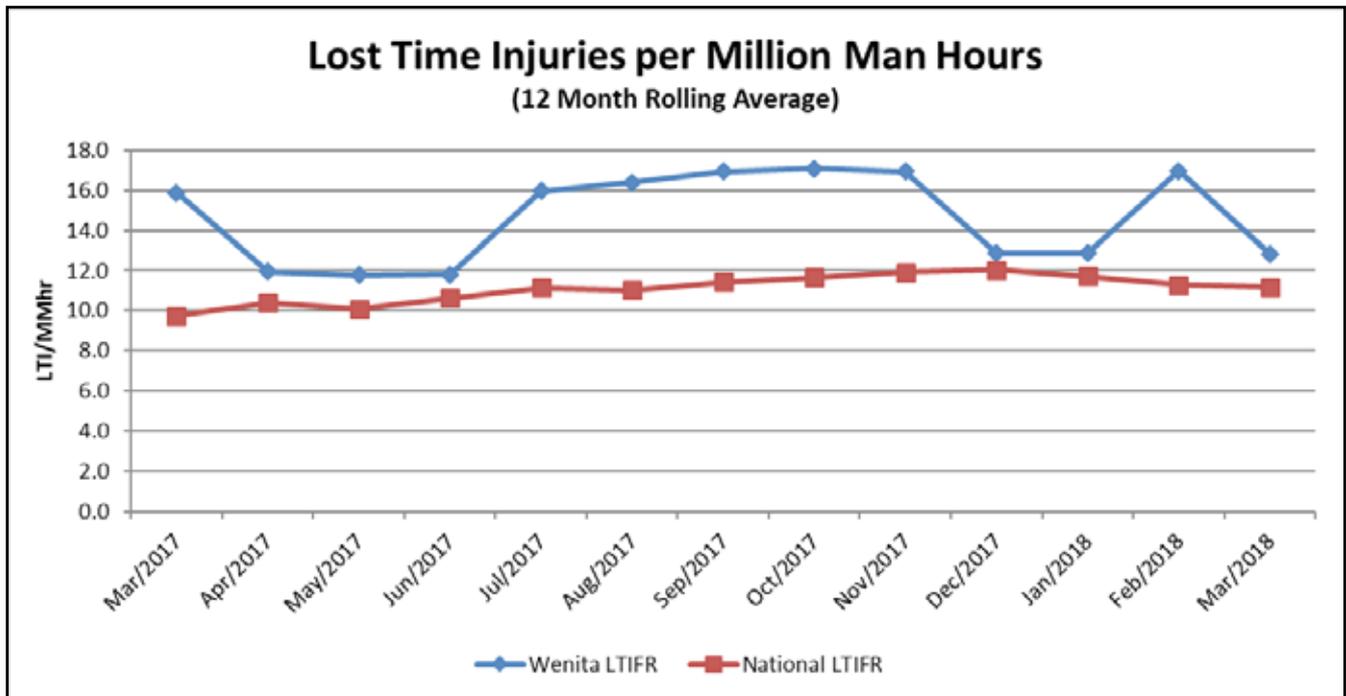
- TopSpot - thinning crews had their first round of audits in February. Signage, PPE, felling cuts and tree selection were the main areas identified for improvement. (See story and graph on page 5).

- The Southern Wood Council Forestry Awards are on May 25 at Forsyth Barr Stadium. Come along to support your peers as they receive Competenz national certificates and industry awards. (See story on page 6).

Environment

The new National Environmental Standard for Plantation Forestry (NES-PF) is now law (since May 1 this year). It requires us to do more formal planning and reporting and some of our operations will need to be modified. Please discuss with your Wenita supervisor about how it affects you. (See story on page 6).

Lost-time injuries and near hits



Since the start of the year there has been one lost-time injury (LTI), one minor injury, and nine near hits. This is a pretty good start to the year as the LTI wasn't a serious incident, although it has still resulted in at least a month off work for the individual concerned. That worker fell over when his foot got caught in a hole when walking through scrub, and as he landed his thumb got caught in his pruning ladder and the ligament was torn. Very unfortunate, but it highlights that extra care needs to be taken when carrying equipment while moving through areas with heavy scrub.

Winter is coming

The nature of the incident is also a reminder that winter is coming, planting season is due to start, and slip/trip/falls will become more of a risk. Whatever activity you are undertaking, make sure you wear suitable footwear that is in good condition, look where you are walking and take your time. Driving to work will also involve added risk as winter approaches. Be alert to the changing conditions as roads get more slippery and, at times, icy. The sun is also lower in the sky and can cause sunstrike, so make sure you:

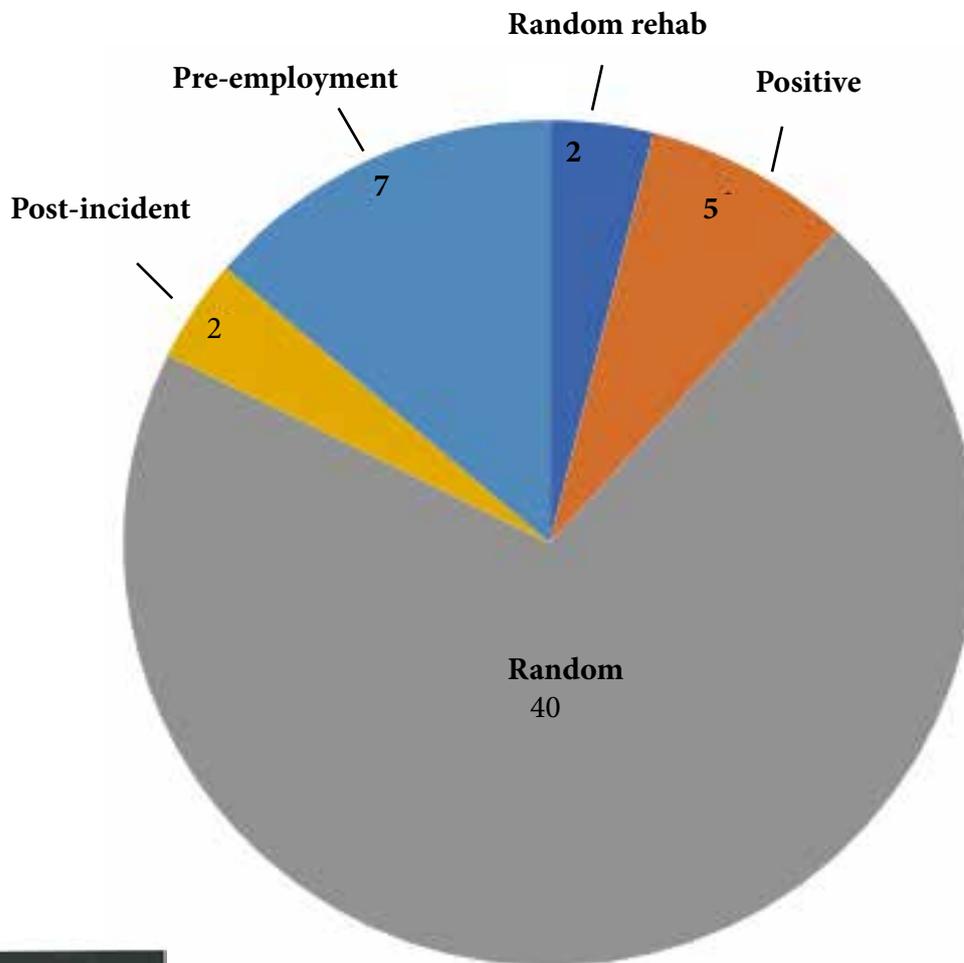
- keep your windscreen clean
- slow down
- wear sunglasses, and
- don't look directly into the sun if you encounter sunstrike.

Near hits

What is surprising, and a little concerning, is the lack of near hits being reported. Over the last three years we have averaged 22 near hits in our first quarter, whereas this year there have only been nine reported, and over half of those came from trucking, who have a very good reporting record. I know we are doing things better, and I know mechanisation is reducing the number of hazards and changing the type of risks. However, I also know our risk profile hasn't halved since last year. Please make sure you report all near hits as they are important in building an understanding of our risk profile and give us the opportunity to continuously improve our risk management. Remember, don't hesitate to report a near hit; we treat them as a positive not a negative.

Drug and alcohol testing

	Total	Negative	Non-Negative	Positive	Drug Positive
Pre-employment	7	7			
Post-incident	2	1	1	1	THC
Reasonable cause	0	0			
Random	40	36	4	4	THC & opiates
Random rehab	2	2			
TOTAL:	51	46	5	5	



Remember that if someone has an accident, or a dangerous near miss, please contact the office immediately and we will arrange for a drug and alcohol test.

Radio communication when loading



The RT drop box that will be at each loading operation.

From May 14 we are re-introducing handheld radios for truck drivers to use when loading. This is so they have clear communication with the loader operator, and can easily ask for logs to be moved, without having to resort to waving their hands.

Last month we had a meeting with all the loader operators about how best to do this, and they came up with some good suggestions, the drop box being one of them. So Wenita has made up two drop boxes for each logging crew to store the RT's in (thanks Willie!), and we suggest that they are placed in the safe zone.

Willie attended the last round of the Dynes Group health and safety meetings and spoke to the drivers about the re-introduction of the RT's, and will talk to the other trucking companies as well. So everyone should now be on board.

Wenita staff will be monitoring RT use during loading, and it is hoped that everyone involved will work together to make the re-introduction of RTs successful, and make this element of the operation safer.

Planting season not far away

This winter we have a large planting programme, with about 720ha within the Wenita estate, and over 900ha of contracted planting, mostly for Ngai Tahu, but also including 55ha for FF9. We will be using a mixture of clonal and CP (control-pollinated) cuttings from Edendale, Rangiora and Te Ngae nurseries, and seedlings from Leithfield, Edendale and Nga Raukau nurseries. Soil moisture conditions are good, and we expect to begin late in May. Survival assessments of last year's plantings have been pleasing, and we will again be emphasising seedling freshness and planting quality.

Controlled burn-off – Waikouaiti

Wenita is contracted by Ngai Tahu Forestry Limited to manage its afforestation project in Otago, and in preparation for planting this winter, more than 400ha of scrub needed to be burned. The scrub had been sprayed early last year, so has had plenty of time to cure. Wenita fire expert John Kerr organised the burn, choosing days with suitable weather forecasts and availability of resources. We were privileged to have fire behaviour scientists Grant Pearce and Veronica Clifford on site on April 20. Thanks to all contractors, Helicopters Otago staff, Wenita staff and others who combined to make the burn-off a success.



Photos during and after the first burn-off on Friday, April 30.

Drone purchase

Wenita has recently purchased an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV or drone) to help with managing forest operations. Potential applications include mapping clearfelled areas, survival assessments of young plantings, SBOs of difficult-to-access operations e.g. skid sites, landprep preassessments, stocking after thinning measurements, spot spray quality control and hot spot detection after fires. Willie Sinclair and Mike Mullan completed their UAV pilot training in March and will be the initial operators of the UAV.



Mounding landprep – Berwick



Areas of the wet flats beside Old Headquarters Road at Berwick have been mounded for planting this winter by Regan Weir of Kealey Contracting. Previously, these flats were occupied by scattered poplar trees, but we aim to successfully establish radiata pine for the next rotation. The mounding will provide the seedlings some drier soil and a little elevation above the frost, and hopefully give them a good start.



Top Spot update



The first silviculture Top Spot audit (thinning) was carried out in February. As expected with a first audit, there was a range of thinning results relative to the wider industry bench-mark:



The red bars represent individual thinners from within Wenita crews. The highest score was achieved by Liam Hoggett from Gutsell Forestry Services – well done Liam!!

Areas that Top Spot auditor Mike Bruce identified for improvement included tree selection, PPE, chainsaw and wedge maintenance, signage, and felling cuts.

The next silviculture audit, from May 8 to 10, will focus on pruning.

Fish survey – Berwick Forest



Eldon's galaxias (above) and brown trout (below) from Meggat Burn site 2.



Several streams within the Berwick main block, and Brown's block, have recently been surveyed to record which fish species are present. Richard Allibone of Waterways Consulting has been undertaking the survey work, and provided this update:

“The survey located three previously unknown populations of Eldon's galaxias, and Blind Road and unnamed tributary populations appear to be in good health. Only two individuals were caught in at the Meggat Burn site, but it can be expected more are present upstream of the fishing area. This site is also well protected from brown trout invasion by a perched culvert and waterfall. Trout barriers downstream of the other two populations have not been located but it is expected there are waterfalls in the steeper reaches below the survey sites. Brown trout occupy the mainstems of the three survey streams. Trout will also be present downstream of the survey sites where they were recorded in this survey. Koura were also widespread occurring at the majority of the sites and the populations were generally in good health with a good range of size classes present.”

New National Environmental Standard

The new National Environmental Standard – Plantation Forestry (NES-PF) came into force on May 1 this year. Wenita has provided notice to the Otago Regional Council (ORC) and Clutha District Council of ongoing earthworks, quarrying and harvesting operations. We have been preparing detailed harvesting and earthworks management plans that must be provided on request to the ORC. Logging and roading contractors please note that if there are “material amendments” to the agreed plans, these must be recorded and signed off by Bruce McDowell.

SWC awards night



The Southern Wood Council Forestry Awards evening is coming up on Friday, May 25, and this year we have nominated or supported six individuals/organisations across a range of awards. There will also be many other individuals who will receive national certificates.

Once again we expect the evening to be hugely successful, with the award-winning guest speaker, Aaron Fleming, promising to be extremely stimulating and motivational.

Pre-registration is important for seating and catering purposes, make sure you get your registration into Phil Williams (P.Williams@competenz.org.nz) by Wednesday, May 23.

Uruguayan foresters visit



Carlos Voulminot (left) and Santiago Cancela (right) of Uruguay.

Two foresters from Uruguay have been visiting Wenita in early May as part of a New Zealand forestry study trip. They have been observing a range of forest operations (landprep, pruning, thinning, harvesting), and reviewing forest management processes and software. Please make them very welcome!

Surf club sponsorship

Wenita is happy to help sponsor the Warrington Surf Club.

Competing at the March TSB New Zealand Surf Life Saving Championships at Midway Beach in Gisborne, were:

- Mark Hastie
- Tom Orchiston
- Wayne Fa'asega
- Ken McHoull

The club won a silver medal in the Master's and was top 10 in New Zealand in the open competition.

