

# Forestry First Aid +F and emergency planning

First Aid +Forestry (EFAW+F) is now considered the industry standard for those working in the forestry sector. But what makes First Aid +F different to conventional first aid at work?

The modern forestry environment is far removed from standard response times with employees often working in remote areas with limited or no communication and challenging access to casualties. At times, conventional emergency services may take longer to respond or need assistance from mountain rescue teams, the Coastguards and helicopters.

First Aid +F takes these special circumstances into account. Workers often have to look after a casualty with possible life threatening conditions for longer periods of time, and help has to come as quickly and effectively as possible to make sure lives are saved. First Aid +F and emergency planning is more than just first aid; it is also about awareness of the working environment, a possible lack of communications and the likely injuries associated with this specific industry. First aid +F courses should be about awareness of the challenges of a worst-case scenario so when it does happen we are better prepared.

## Remote casualty evacuation planning

One of the key factors of First Aid +F should include some form of casualty evacuation planning. This is mainly about making sure we get help to the casualty as quickly and effectively as possible. We can have the best equipment and first aid skills but if we are left on our own without help coming we are putting lives at risk.

We need to think more about how we communicate with the emergency services when an accident occurs. If we can provide detailed information about the persons injuries, location, conditions on the ground, and best access to the site we can hopefully get assistance to casualties quicker.

## Getting help fast

Communications in the modern forestry environment haven't changed much over the years; although we have smarter mobile phones nowadays, we often work in areas with unreliable phone coverage. A mobile phone might have signal one day but not the next.

Satellite technology has advanced in recent years and the introduction of personal locator beacons is becoming more common. Spot messenger devices have been adopted by many workers but they only provide one-way communication. People on the ground have no confirmation if the message arrived



FORESTRY  
REQUIRES A  
DIFFERENT  
APPROACH TO  
FIRST AID SAYS

**STEWART  
RICHARDSON**

and if help is on its way. We could be left waiting without knowing what help – if any is coming – and, more importantly, how long it will take.

There are other devices on the market that offer two-way communication. The DeLorne Inreach Explorer offers this service, meaning both the people on the ground and the emergency services are much better informed.

Giving the correct location of the casualty  
When communicating with the emergency services we need to give details of the conditions on the ground as much as about the casualty. The only effective way to do this is by using a grid reference. Postcodes equate to a building or venue but a grid reference gives us much more information about a location. It helps the emergency services decide on the level of response and whether to deploy the conventional ambulance service or escalate it to other services. The Ordnance Survey has just released a great mobile phone app called OS Locate that will give us a grid reference without a mobile phone signal.

## Adapting first aid practices

The HSE has also recognised the requirement for specialist Forestry First Aid +F training and is now recommending that all Forestry First Aid + F courses include training on hemostatic clotting agents like Celox, tourniquets and defibrillators. This is a major shift in first aid techniques but for remote first aid, this has been standard practice for several years now. I often get asked about first aid equipment and what is required on a forestry site. My answer has always been that the first aid kit you have on you at the time is the best one.

First aid kits need to be specific to the job at hand so the ability to treat major trauma injuries is a key requirement. All too often we think that the standard off-the-shelf first aid kits are up to that job, however, they are not suitably equipped for forestry operations. They are bulky, therefore tend to get left behind in the vehicles; they are great until you get trapped by a fallen tree or have a broken leg – far away from your car or truck.

The trauma dressing is a one-bandage-fits-all product. It has a large wound dressing capable of soaking up high volumes of blood. It is made of an elasticated material which allows to apply more pressure to the wound. It also has a pressure pad and bar so can be made into an improvised tourniquet. Celox and Quick Clot are hemostatic clotting agents used to help the blood clot more quickly.

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These two products used correctly may negate the use of a tourniquet and save a life in major trauma injuries. They can be carried in a pocket so are more effective than the larger kits that are left behind in vehicles.

Something else I highly recommend in a first aid kit is the means to protect a casualty from hypothermia. The classic orange survival bag used by hill walkers is a good starting point. It is waterproof and reduces wind chill so casualties can be temporary protected from the elements, while we gather more appropriate equipment to prevent hypothermia.

The first aid industry is catching on to First Aid +F and I often get asked if you can do a bolt on to an existing first aid qualification. The answer is no, there are a lot of shared skills but this article hopefully raises awareness of the specific considerations that are relevant for forestry workers. First Aid +F is teaching first aid to people working in the context of remote locations and environments with possible major trauma injuries. First Aid +F courses need to continually refer to this in all first aid situations. It's important when choosing a First Aid +F provider that they understand your working environment. It may mean the defiance between life and death in a serious incident.



Stewart Richardson is the founder and owner of CA First Aid and has been delivering first aid to the forestry sector for over 10 years now.

A former member of the Royal Engineers, Galloway Mountain Rescue Team and Overseas Expedition Leader, Stewart has a real understanding of the challenges of working in rural environments often far away from help.

As a member of UK FISA, CA First Aid specialise in delivering forestry EFAW+F first aid courses to the Forest Industry and over the years has developed a EFAW+F course that is both informative and relevant to the sector.

CA First Aid is a member of Confor.



**To find open and bespoke courses visit**  
[www.cafirstaid.co.uk](http://www.cafirstaid.co.uk)

**Emergency services** phone number 112 /999 ask Ambulance Service or Police if Mountain Rescue Team required.

**Mobile phone apps**

OS Ordnance Survey Locate  
 View Ranger

**Forestry Commission first aid policy**

[www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-8wmpmq](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-8wmpmq)  
[www.hse.gov.uk/treework/site-management/first-aid.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/treework/site-management/first-aid.htm)



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## FORESTRY FIRST AID ESSENTIALS

[1] KEEP IN TOUCH:  
 INREACH EXPLORER

[2] BE FOUND:  
 OS LOCATE

[3] STEM THE FLOW:  
 EMERGENCY BANDAGE

[4] KEEP WARM:  
 ORANGE SURVIVAL BAG



1



2



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