**Companion Volume**

**User Guide: Fell Trees Manually**

**FWP Forest and Wood Products Training Package**

**Version 9.0**

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# User Guide: Modification History

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| Release number | Release date | Author | Comments |
| 1.0 | [Month 2024] | Skills Insight | User Guide created to accompany FWP Forest and Wood Products Training Package V9.0. |

# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

This user guide contains information on three key aspects:

* Guidelines on recommended entry requirements for the “fell trees manually” units, emphasising safety and risk assessment responsibilities
* Guidelines for supporting the delivery of the “fell trees manually” units of competency, taking into account the challenges faced by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) due to limited availability of trees for training and skill assessment.
* Industry-recommended age limit for enrolment in the “fell trees manually” units.

These units covered in this guide are:

* FWPCOT2275 Fell trees manually (basic)
* FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate)
* FWPCOT3351 Fell trees manually (advanced)

**Limited availability of trees for training and skills assessment**

The availability of trees for training and assessing skills in manual tree felling has become increasingly constrained.

The practice of using a chainsaw to fell trees serves as a fundamental competency across a range of sectors, including forestry operations, agriculture, and arboriculture. This skill is not only used in routine activities but also essential during emergency events such as storms, cyclones, and bushfires.

However, strict policies imposed by various organisations and governmental bodies, often due to environmental considerations and heritage protection, limit the felling of non-hazardous trees. These restrictions have created a challenging landscape for RTOs and the acquisition and practice of essential chainsaw tree felling skills.

To adapt to the constraints imposed by the availability of trees suitable for chainsaw felling training, RTOs may consider implementing a multi-faceted approach to sustain the quality of their programs.

One effective strategy is the utilisation of simulated training environments for initial practice, complemented by hands-on exercises on actual trees to offer trainees exposure to real-world scenarios. This blended training model offers a comprehensive, safe and sustainable learning experience.

In addition, integrating evidence of performance gathered from workplace activities into the training and assessment framework can enable efficient use of existing workplace infrastructures, optimising the use of tree resources

It is also advisable for training organisations to establish collaborative relationships with relevant agencies, such as forestry organisation and government bodies, to identify specific trees that can be responsibly used for training purposes.

The exploration of simulator-based training could also serve as an invaluable supplementary tool, enriching traditional methods and providing a more scalable and sustainable training model.

By employing these varied approaches, training providers can better navigate existing restrictions while maintaining the highest standards of instruction. Further guidelines are detailed in the subsequent sections.

# Section 1: Entry Recommendations and Risk Assessment Responsibilities

The Application section within each “fell trees manually” units contains the following statement:

*Individuals who seek to undertake this unit should have prior experience in operating a chainsaw for the purpose of felling trees at this level in order to ensure their safety while completing this training.*

The industry not only strongly recommends but expects that individuals enrolling in any of the tree felling units have pre-existing skills and knowledge of chainsaw operation specific to tree felling and associated risk level. This ensures they approach the training with the requisite safety awareness and competence for each skill level: basic, intermediate and advanced. Training providers are advised to implement the following structured sequence for unit enrolment or entry requirements, ensuring individuals meet the foundational skills that are essential for each skill level.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The units in question | Recommended entry requirements (the current units or their predecessors) |
| FWPCOT2275 Fell trees manually (basic) | Any of the following units:  AHCMOM213 Operate and maintain chainsaws  FWPCOT2256 Trim and cut felled trees  FWPHAR2209 Trim and cut harvested trees |
| FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate) | FWPCOT2275 Fell trees manually (basic) |
| FWPCOT3351 Fell trees manually (advanced) | FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate) |

If an individual possesses an equivalent level of knowledge and skills gained through informal learning or coaching, a preliminary test (administered within the available course delivery hours) could be used at the course's commencement to determine this equivalence.

It is important to understand that this recommendation does not establish a compliance element to training delivery. Instead, it provides guidelines that underscore the importance of safety and the duty of care of training providers. It entrusts training providers with the responsibility to consider prior experience and integrate it into their risk assessment processes. In essence, this becomes a risk assessment responsibility.

# Section 2: Application of Simulated Training Environments

Industry recommends the implementation of simulated training environments for preliminary practice in chainsaw tree felling cutting techniques to help improve efficiency in using trees. This should be complemented by practice and assessment sessions on actual trees, which adhere to performance criteria outlined in the unit of competency, to ensure trainees gain valuable experience in real-world scenarios.

**Methods:**

To facilitate practice within simulated training environments, two methods are proposed:

* Utilise vertically secured short logs, also known as "totem poles" or “practice stumps”, to simulate the conditions of a standing tree
* Strap sections of logs to field stumps to mimic the conditions of felling a real tree.

**Benefits:**

The adoption of these simulated training environments offers multiple advantages:

* Provides a cost-efficient and safe training method for beginner trainees, imparting valuable training to participants before progressing training on real trees
* Allows trainees to practice multiple cuts on a single log, thereby conserving the number of trees required for training
* Minimises the risk of error when trainees transition to felling real trees, contributing to sustainable tree management practices.

# Section 3: Workplace-Based Evidence Collection

Industry recommends incorporating evidence of performance collected from the workplace, either through direct observations or a third-party, into the training and assessment framework for chainsaw tree felling courses.

**Methods:**

Two methods for collecting performance evidence from the workplace are proposed:

* Use direct observation of the trainee in the workplace via live digital video technology, especially in remote locations where the physical presence of a trainer and/or assessor may be impractical
* Use a third-party such a suitably qualified supervisor, to collect workplace evidence, including video recordings and/or observations, to record skill and knowledge in action.

Further details are available at [**https://www.asqa.gov.au/resources/guides/guide-using-other-parties-collect-assessment-evidence**](https://www.asqa.gov.au/resources/guides/guide-using-other-parties-collect-assessment-evidence)

**Benefits:**

* Enables efficient use of existing workplace infrastructures, including trees that have been earmarked for felling, thus optimising the use of tree resources
* Enhances trainer confidence in the learner's acquisition of skills.

**Additional Notes:**

While the units of competency for tree felling do not specify mandatory workplace requirements or work placement hours, industry strongly agrees on the need for rigorous training and assessment due to the high-risk nature of the activity. An effective strategy is grounded in extended periods of workplace practice and evaluation. Learners should acquire practical skills and experience under the guidance of a suitably qualified workplace supervisor, adhering to predefined evaluation criteria.

**Suitably Qualified Supervisor:**

To ensure the highest standards of safety and competency in manual tree felling, a trainee undergoing training and/or assessment in the workplace must be supervised by a suitably qualified individual who is an employee of the same employer.

A qualified supervisor should hold an equivalent or higher-level "fell tree manually" unit, and possess current skills and knowledge, along with on-the-job experience.

# Section 4: Forming Strategic Partnerships for Tree Allocation

Industry recommends establishing strategic partnerships to identify trees that can be responsibly utilised for training purposes in manual tree felling courses.

**Types of Partnerships:**

* Commercial forest partnerships: Partnering with commercial forest entities to facilitate training on trees designated for thinning
* Government body partnerships: Collaborate with relevant local governmental bodies to enable the strategic allocation of public forest resources for training
* RTO-to-RTO partnerships: In geographically feasible situations, form alliances with trusted RTOs that have access to trees for training. This can facilitate the sharing of candidates and, possibly, theoretical and practical training resources.

**Benefits:**

* Sustainable resource utilisation: By engaging in partnerships, training providers can ensure a sustainable and streamlined approach to resource allocation, optimising the use of available trees for training
* Distributed responsibility: Such collaborations distribute the burden of training resource (trees) management, thereby reducing the operational and logistical load on individual training providers.

# Section 5: Age Guidelines for Training in Manual Tree Felling

Operating a chainsaw to fell trees is categorised as a high-risk activity, requiring stringent safety measures and adequate training to mitigate the inherent risks involved.

In Australia, high risk work licences – which serve as regulatory prerequisites for engaging in various high-risk occupations – are restricted to individuals aged 18 years and above.

While a high risk work licence is not explicitly mandated for the operation of chainsaws in tree felling activities, industry strongly advocates for responsible training practices recommending that training in these specific units of competency is not suitable for individuals under the age of 16.

This recommendation aims to enhance safety protocols, as younger individuals may lack the maturity and judgement required to safely perform such high-risk tasks.

Consequently, it is widely advised that training in the use of chainsaws for tree felling should not be conducted for individuals under the age of 16, aligning with industry's commitment to uphold the highest standards of safety and competence and to ensuring both the safety of operators and the broader community.

# Section 6: Useful Information

Training resources:

* [Tree Faller’s Manual](https://forestworks.com.au/tree-fallers-manual/) – A handbook for operators who need to fell trees manually using a chainsaw.
* [Tree falling safe behavioural observation](https://safetree.nz/resources/tree-falling-safe-behavioural-observation/) – A form to record behavioural observations for tree fellers.
* [Professional tree felling competency assessment tool](https://safetree.nz/resources/safetree-tree-faller-assessment-tools/) – A training and assessment tool for tree fellers.
* [Tree faller logbook](https://safetree.nz/resources/tree-faller-logbook/) – A logbook to track the time spent manually felling trees
* [Tree felling best practice guide](https://safetree.nz/resources/tree-felling-bpg/) – Best practice guidelines for tree-felling
* [Other resources](https://safetree.nz/resources/#.item__tree-falling)

Additional skills that may be necessary for specific tasks or workplaces:

* [FWPCOT3317 Use chainsaw within a tree](https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/FWPCOT3317)
* [FWPHAR3235 Conduct mechanically assisted tree falling operations](https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/FWPHAR3235)