

April 2019

## **FISC'S KYND WELLNESS HEALTH PILOT**

### **SUMMARY**

A health pilot programme run by FISC/Safetree in 2018 identified key risks to the physical and mental wellbeing of forestry workers. The findings from the pilot will be helpful to forestry companies that want to improve the health of workers because they identify key health issues to focus on. The pilot used data from 774 forestry workers and identified the following health risks:

- **SMOKING:** 23% are smokers
- **HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE:** 69% have elevated/high blood pressure, indicating an increased risk of a heart attack or stroke
- **FATIGUE:** 51% have sleep issues
- **DIABETES:** 14% had a blood test result that indicates either pre-diabetes or diabetes
- **WEIGHT:** 39% have a waist circumference that suggests a high risk of injury (e.g. getting out of machinery) and long-term disease such as type 2 diabetes
- **HIGH COLESTROL:** 12.5% have high cholesterol / 19% have an unhealthy cholesterol ratio, indicating an increased risk of cardiovascular disease
- **DEPRESSION:** 23% were at risk of moderate to severe depression / 4% screened positive for severe depression.

The pilot included a 14-stop regional roadshow where more than 1,100 forestry workers were given plain language information on how to look after their physical, mental and social health. **As a result of the pilot**, 226 workers were alerted that they have high/elevated blood pressure. Another 38 were alerted that they have pre-diabetes/diabetes and 80 people were alerted they were at risk for depression. Follow up emails were sent to 106 high risk forestry workers to help them come up with a plan to improve their health and lower their risks.

The pilot was run in partnership with KYND Wellness, FICA, and with input from Rayonier Matariki.

## **THE PROBLEM: POOR HEALTH IN FORESTRY AFFECTING WELLBEING & SAFETY**

Anecdotal evidence, and the limited data available, suggests there is significant risk in the forest industry due to the physical, mental and social health of workers and their families. It is believed that in addition to affecting worker wellbeing, health risks also have a significant impact on safety<sup>1</sup>. This is a concern for forestry, which has a stubbornly high fatality rate despite significant industry efforts to improve safety. Compounding the problem is that forestry is an industry where long hours make it hard for people to get to the doctor, where many workers have low health literacy, and where many workers don't know they are at risk.

A lack of information and awareness about forestry's health risks has meant that in the past health has tended to take a 'back seat' to safety when it comes to harm prevention initiatives. In more recent years some companies have begun running health and wellbeing initiatives. But there has been no industry-wide data available to guide them on where they should target their efforts. The absence of any industry-wide health initiatives also means the industry is missing out on opportunities to scale-up health protection activities in a cost-effective way and deliver 'more for less'. In fact, there hasn't even been any way to collect industry-wide information on health risks and their implications for workers and the industry. This lack of information about the problem has inhibited the ability to develop relevant and affordable health and wellbeing initiatives that could be used across the industry. It's hard to fix the problem if you don't really understand what it is.

## **THE PILOT – 'DR TOM' ROADSHOW AND THE KYND APP**

To explore how this knowledge gap could be filled, and to start improving the health of forestry workers, FISC ran a pilot project in 2018 with Dr Tom Mulholland of the KYND Wellness group.

Dr Mulholland is a medical doctor and former NZ Forest Service worker who now focuses on improving the health of workers. KYND is a mobile phone app he developed to enable individuals to easily store and track their physical, mental and social health data, and to take action to improve their health. The app is very user-friendly – using a simple green, orange, red traffic light system to help people understand their health risks. It also includes information to help people who get

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<sup>1</sup> At FISC workshops in 2018, forestry workers estimated that up to 80% of incidents were caused, at least in part, by health & wellbeing related issues.

‘orange’ or ‘red’ traffic lights to get themselves back into ‘green’. The idea is to empower workers to be more able to look after their own health, and their families’.

Between May and August 2018 Dr Tom (as he is known) and FISC completed a 14-stop regional roadshow that reached more than 1,100 forestry workers face-to-face. At the roadshows, run in partnership with the Forest Industry Contractors Association, Dr Tom gave workers advice on how to look after their physical, mental and social health. He used language anyone could understand – for examples he talked about ‘pipes and pumps’ when explaining medical problems like cholesterol.

Attendees at the workshops were invited to download the KYND app for free and to answer questions about their physical, mental and social health<sup>2</sup>. The app processed their responses and provided them with an immediate assessment of their health, including any ‘orange’ or ‘red’ areas that required follow up. At the FISC roadshows, 449 people downloaded the app. Another 325 downloaded it following visits by Dr Tom and his team to Rayonier Matariki crews. While this activity wasn’t part of the FISC pilot, all the data came back to the same collection point in the KYND team.

## **THE BENEFITS – FOR THE INDUSTRY AND INDIVIDUAL WORKERS**

### ***1. Creating a risk profile for the health of forestry’s workers***

As a result of this work, FISC had a sample of 774 workers whose anonymised data could be used to provide evidence-based insights into the health of people working in forestry. The results were processed by the KYND team and produced the following insights about the 774 workers:

- 23% are current smokers<sup>3</sup>
- 39% have a waist circumference that suggests a high risk of injury (e.g. getting out of machinery) and long-term disease such as type 2 diabetes
- 69% have elevated or high blood pressure, indicating an increased risk of a heart attack or stroke
- 12.5% have high cholesterol

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<sup>2</sup> At the largest workshop in Rotorua, attendees were given a basic health check with the results entered into the app. Other workers entered this data using information from their doctor or workplace health checks

<sup>3</sup> One crew of 10 spends \$1,000 a week on nicotine. One worker spends 37% of net-pay on nicotine. Nicotine withdrawal and not having enough money to buy food at the end of the pay cycle increases the risk of injury.

- 19% have an unhealthy cholesterol ratio, indicating an increased risk of cardiovascular disease
- 14% had a blood test result that indicates either pre-diabetes or diabetes
- 51% have sleep issues
- 23% were at risk of moderate to severe depression
- 4% screened positive for severe depression.

Information from the pilot and Rayonier Matariki crews was put into a health risks fact sheet that was published on the Safetree website. This information will help forestry companies who want to improve the wellbeing of workers to decide where to focus their attention.

## ***2. Benefits to individual workers***

**Workshops:** The 1,100 forestry workers who attended the 14-stop regional workshops received advice on how to look after their physical, mental and social health. This advice was delivered by Dr Tom in a way that everyone could understand, in a more familiar environment (RSAs, local halls, on site etc., rather than a doctor's office) and in a way that encouraged people to take action.

**Proving a pathway to better health:** While collecting baseline data was an important goal of this pilot, the primary objective was to test KYND's ability to provide a 'help-seeking' pathway for workers. The KYND app is designed to, firstly, help workers recognise that they need help and, second, to help them identify how they can get help. Results to date for individual workers (see below) suggest it has been very effective on both counts

**Helping individual workers recognise they need help:** KYND alerted 226 workers that they have high/elevated blood pressure. Another 38 were alerted that they have pre-diabetes/diabetes and 80 people were alerted they were at risk for depression. FISC engaged KYND to follow up by email with 106 high risk forestry workers (those with 'red' traffic lights) to help them come up with a plan to improve their health and lower their risks.



## CONCLUSION

The outcome of this pilot has been hugely beneficial to people working in forestry. For the first time, the industry has robust information about the state of the health of its workers. This benchmark can be used to measure changes and the effectiveness of health initiatives over time.

The data will help individual companies to understand which health risks they should be targeting and to make better choices about how they invest in worker wellbeing. The industry now has a clearer sense of where pan-industry work on improving health should be focused, along with a benchmark that can be used to track progress.

Last, but definitely not least, the workers involved in the pilot have a better understanding of their health risks and information on how to make improvements. A significant number of workers with serious health issues have been given specific help to get better. The pilot was successful enough that FISC is now considering how it could fund a wider roll-out of the KYND app so it could benefit more workers.

## MORE INFORMATION

See FISC Executive Director Fiona Ewing talking about the KYND App, including how it's helped her.

<https://www.facebook.com/255468395108744/posts/296644777657772?sfns=mo>

## ABOUT KNYD WELLNESS

KYND wellness was founded in 2016 by Dr Tom Mulholland. After spending 30+ years working in the emergency department and seeing countless preventable illnesses, Dr Tom decided he wanted to put the ambulance at the top of the cliff, rather than the bottom. He set out on a mission to travel New Zealand in a pop-up clinical ambulance, completing comprehensive health checks and collecting data. Dr Tom and his team identified another issue with health care; there was no real centralized data collection. Dr Tom decided to create an app where on an individual and industry level, data could be stored to better manage health. The KYND app is designed for individuals to easily store and track their medical data. Simple traffic lights; green, yellow and red, allow patients to see where they have areas of risk. Small bits of easily digestible information on how to improve these risk areas were designed, and the app was rolled out through many companies in Aotearoa.