

# Celtic Reforestation



## *Nothing is more important than safety in the bush*

Celtic Reforestation has planted over 280 million seedlings since 1984 with its team of mostly young workers. They have come to realize that working safely is as important as planting the trees, an attitude that has resulted in only one significant injury in 24 years.

“The working forest is a dynamic environment that presents unique challenges to safety management. Working outside in the bugs, rain and mud with a dispersed work force makes it a difficult place to track who you’ve talked to and what you talked about. To be successful, we had to find ways to make it easy for all our supervisory people to document who they talked to, what they talked about and when they talked about safety to our people,” says Dave Wilson, President and Owner of Celtic Reforestation. “We’ve developed a number of practical checklists that our people use as both a training guide and a record of safety training.”

On the first day of the season, young workers receive an orientation that follows a comprehensive training checklist. The checklist covers a number of job related tasks and hazards ensuring that young workers are alerted to the hazards of the job and the importance of safety on their worksites. Some of the topics include:

- forest fire safety
- danger tree identification
- working alone procedures
- weather & forces of nature

The Prince George-based company also teaches them how to stay healthy by emphasizing:

- adequate hydration
- proper nutrition
- ergonomic working techniques

Because young workers may encounter wild animals while out in the bush, they also receive bear aware and wild animal training.

Safe driving is a big concern, especially when vehicles go deep into the woods. Operating a motor vehicle on bush roads presents new and additional hazards that have resulted in Celtic Reforestation developing a separate vehicle safety plan. Any worker who will operate a vehicle is trained and then evaluated based on an off highway check ride and written examination. Even passengers are trained on how to be effective vehicle co-pilots.

Young workers also learn how to plant seedlings correctly so as to avoid the most common injuries for tree planters: repetitive strain injuries. In fact, most people are likely to injure themselves in the first couple of weeks on the job. After learning proper technique, young workers learn how to safely adapt their skills to best suit them.

In addition, Celtic Reforestation holds weekly health and safety meetings where each planting crew discusses safety issues and practices a safety skill – such as stretcher procedures.

“You really have to concentrate on attitudes,” says Wilson. “You know you are having success when you see young workers talking about how to do a task safely and beginning to take responsibility for their own safety.”

Even after initial training, young workers know that safety remains a key priority out in the bush. Celtic Reforestation’s successful program means employees remain safe, able, and enthusiastic.

“We have seen our injuries decline on a year-by-year basis,” says Wilson. “Our workforce has really embraced the concept that working safely is very directly linked to working more days and ultimately earning more wages.”

Celtic Reforestation’s investment in safety is not only good for workers, but also for business.