

# Presentation by Hannes Snorrason

*The inspectors view on the climbing worksite and risk assessment for climbing*

My name is Hannes Snorrason and I work for the Administration of Occupational Safety and Health in Iceland. Most of my work there is working as an inspector, but I do have many other tasks for ex. investigating accidents. I also take part in all sorts of development projects as this one here.

In Iceland there have not been a lot of high trees through time but in recent years it is changing rapidly. There is actually an old saying at home that if you get lost in a forest in Iceland, all you have to do is stand up and look around, but that is far from the truth today. The number of working arborists and forest workers in Iceland are increasing with all the risks and hazards of the job. This was noted by many good people as our project leader, Ágústa Erlingsdóttir who started this project and invited my department to join in at the beginning.

My input was intended to be from the inspector's point of view as well as look into the formalities of an overseeing inspecting body. To get the best view for the task, I had to gain a good understanding of this type of work. That meant that I had to participate in the project as a forest worker/arborist and do what the other participants were doing. This meant that I took the appropriate courses with the others as a part of the team, in felling, climbing and working in the tree.

Though my experience in the field was limited, I had some knowledge of forestry work as well as the sight of the inspector. But the world which the project revealed for me was a new one all together and I can easily say that it has been an experience working with the team.

When we talk about safety and health it is always about the same thing all over the world and in all fields of work. That is, to come home from work in one piece and more so, also without work related sicknesses, aches and pain from a bad shoulder or back for ex. The older way of Occupational Safety and Health was for ex. about educating and training the worker, putting up signs and supplying personal protective equipment but many times people were just hired without any training or protection at all. The new way is to eliminate the danger if possible and try to design and build machinery and workplaces in a way to fulfill that goal. Sometimes though, we cannot go far enough in that direction so we take up extra measures to attack the task at hand, that is to keep the workplace safe.

This is where the risk assessment comes into the game at full force.

We all do many risk assessments every day like crossing the street or walking down the stairs of a house but we don't of course do the assessment in writing. But when it comes to fulfilling serious tasks at work, we need to do the risk assessment in a more thorough manner. That's why we do it in writing with a plan of correcting measures or tasks. Some of those tasks involve training the worker but if that is not enough to insure safety we go even further.

The end of the stick is to demand some sort of a license where the worker has to take a course and an exam to prove that he has the skills for the job. A good example of this is a driving license or a machine operators license.

Now I want to mention the project we are working at and point out that it fits into all these categories.

The chainsaw is a fierce and dangerous tool and if someone had just invented it, probably it would be banned immediately as an unsafe tool. Another hazard involving the project is the act of climbing in trees as well as pruning or felling them and it would be an understatement if I didn't say that it involves many serious risks, when you mix climbing in high trees hanging from a rope, operating a chainsaw.

After being a member of the group during it's time of development, I can see better and better how many different risks there are in this job and to deal with those risks, we are at the end of the stick so to speak. The project is about development of teaching material which

others can then use in search for safer working environment. It requires that contestants not only go through stiff training, but they need to take a test at the end of the course to proof that they are worthy to work in this dangerous situation.

As an inspector I see several advantages taking part in the project, not only to gain information about this type of work, methods and the dangers involved, but also to develop checklists or tools to use. That sort of checklists are of course useful for the worker as well as the companies in the field but also for the inspector.

At present, several ideas are being looked at and some are basically ready and have been in progress for years. The group members from Denmark, Bent Jensen and Marianne Lyhne, have been teaching climbing and tree pruning and felling for years and do have a lot of material which they have brought into the program. Is it safe to say that they have a lifelong experience in the field plus being a major drive in the project.

Those products already or almost finished, is risk assessment for this type of work and list of things to check before work is carried out. Does that for ex. Involve an annual equipment check which is an important factor. We also are establishing a list for inspectors, what to look for when a company in this field is visited but also importantly, what to look for when an accident is being investigated.

A risk assessment guideline for this type of work has already been made so let´s take a look:

- **“Risk assessment”.**

(Show risk assessment and read a little from it.)

I want to show you some of the questions I have to ask and look for when investigating an accident but of course that sort of list will newer be perfect but merely a guideline for the investigator.

- **“What should be investigated in an accident at climbing.”**

(Show list and read a little from it.)

We have also a list for the forestry worker working on the ground:

- **“Checklist for logging, trimming and brush cutting at ground level.”**

(Show list and read a little from it.)

A list in the making for the worker who has to climb and work in the tree as well as for the inspector:

- **“Checklist for climbing for companies and investigating bodies”**

(Show list and read a little from it.)

On top of that, guidelines for annual inspection need to be established and legal matters solved, for example who is qualified to perform such a task or does the climber do it him self.

Here at the end, thought the project is not quite finished yet, I would like to thank all the good people who are participating in the development of the project.

It is definite that a finer and more enthusiastic bunch hardly exists, but there knowledge of the task at hand is what counts in the end. I can assure you that the group consists of professionals who are very skilled in all angels of this type of work and they can be trusted.

Please collect information about the finished product when it will be published in spring next year for the greater good of safety at work.

Buckle up. (Put the seatbelt on always.)

Thank you.