



Audit Awareness and Information for Loggers

This tip sheet has been developed to help you understand what you might expect when a forest management audit occurs while you, or members of your crew, are working on a site. Further, it will help you anticipate some of the questions an auditor might ask and suggests some potential responses based on your training and experience as an MLEP logging professional.

What Can I Expect During an Audit?

Professionals working in the field can expect an increasing number of audits to take place, either to determine implementation of Minnesota's Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines, or your implementation of the standards under which the property you are harvesting is certified. They may want to assess your understanding of laws and regulations and your awareness of forest management certification programs like the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) or the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC). They may also inquire about your experience and training as a logging professional. You can make a favorable impression by having available a copy of your harvest contract, sale map, and Minnesota's Voluntary Site-Level Guidelines. If you are working on non-certified private land, you should show the auditor a copy of the SFI Landowner's Manual or other materials you use to help educate private landowners about sustainable forest management.

What Questions Might I be Asked?

Your MLEP training has prepared you well to answer any questions an auditor might ask, however, it can be easy for anyone to overlook or fail to recall some of the steps taken when working with private landowners, conducting a harvest or in highlighting the training they have received and their experience as a professional. The following is a list of actual questions that auditors have asked loggers. Although, you should use your own words and answer honestly based on your own training, understanding and actual practice - we have listed some potential responses for your consideration to ensure you get credit for your training, experience and professionalism.

Questions regarding you and your crew

Is forest management certification in place on the property on which you are working?

If so, do you understand the objectives of forest management certification?

- Yes, I have received training on forest management certification and the objectives of good forestry which include protecting water quality, visual quality, wildlife, cultural resources and soil.

Have you completed any training program? Are your crew members trained?

- Yes, I am a MLEP member and attend training annually. My crew members also attend training.

What steps do you take to make yourself aware of any cultural resources or endangered or threatened species that may be present on a jobsite? What are some of the species you are readily aware of?

- I discuss known cultural resources and endangered or threatened species with the landowner or forester and, when working with private landowners, contact the DNR,

Office of the State Archeologist and the State Historic Preservation Office as may be appropriate to determine if there are any known concerns with the harvest area.

- I am aware of the bald eagle, osprey Canada lynx, northern goshawk, red-shouldered hawk, timber wolf, timber rattle snake, Blanding's turtle and the wood turtle. I have received training on state and federal endangered and threatened species and the appropriate actions. When in doubt, I stop operations and contact the forester or DNR.

Have you ever found a cultural resource or endangered species on an active logging job? If so, what action did you take?

- I contacted [NAME and title] and followed their recommendations.

How are RMZs marked?

- Boundaries are marked on the map or aerial photo and marked on site with ribbon or paint.

What would you communicate to a non-industrial private landowner if you saw a riparian area that was not marked as above?

- I would consult Minnesota's Voluntary Site-Level guidelines for the specific width, residual basal area, and other recommendations appropriate to the specific kind of water body involved, and communicate the recommendations to the landowner.

Is there a pre-sale meeting to discuss special features such as sensitive wet areas?

- I conduct on-site meetings with the landowner and/or forester to discuss landowner objectives, timber harvesting guidelines, contract specifications, site conditions and review any checklists.

What measures do you take to ensure safety?

- I attend 8 hours of LogSafe training annually, keep my first-aid and CPR training up-to-date, keep first-aid kits on site, wear personal protective equipment and seat belts, keep fire extinguishers in working order and nearby, maintain safe working distance and follow OSHA rules.

Do you keep MSDS sheets on site?

- Yes, we maintain copies of the necessary MSDS sheets for logging, road building and trucking as necessary. These include MSDS sheets for diesel fuel, unleaded gasoline, hydraulic oil, oil, grease and antifreeze.

What information do you provide private landowners?

- I use [Name the actual resources you use (ex. Landowner Manual)] to encourage discussion of the landowner's objectives, the timber harvest, the use of management guidelines, the importance of reforestation and I use a written contract.

What efforts do you take to protect water quality?

- State the strategies you actually use, such as filter strips, water diversion structures, avoiding rutting and maintaining RMZs. You may want to mention that you avoid riparian areas when planning skid trails, roads, and landings.

What efforts do you take to maintain visual quality?

- List strategies you actually use, and point out specific areas of the current job where they have been implemented. Remember to mention leave tree clumps, dispersed slash over the site, creation of irregularly shaped openings and limiting apparent harvest size as appropriate, and how you might properly dispose of trash and locate roads and landings out of view of travel routes and recreation areas.

What type of information is found on contract map/harvest plan?

- Site location/boundaries, management goal, cutting regulations, slash disposal, regeneration information, sale design specifications, requirements for riparian management, visual quality, wildlife habitat, cultural resources, and pre and post-harvest actions.

How do you maintain the chain of custody when you harvest certified wood for resale?

- When I harvest certified wood from private or public certified forest land, I need to maintain a paper trail that shows the permit number(s), volume(s), and species harvested from the site each day. Scale tickets are the usual way of doing this on public land.

Questions you may be asked regarding the mill or agency you are working with

Does the company/agency have a written procurement policy? Has it ever been communicated to you?

- Yes, they have conducted training workshops and communicated with me their expectations and procurement policy.

Does the company/agency support logger and landowner education?

- Yes, they require MLEP training; use of the Landowner's Manual and supports logger and landowner training organizations.

Does the company/agency perform periodic BMP/Guideline audits on logging jobs?

- They conduct random harvest and road inspections to ensure forest management guidelines and sale requirements are being met.

Does the company/agency have a set of utilization standards?

- Yes, they require us to utilize all merchantable trees cut and minimize waste.

Has the company/agency discussed trash on logging jobs, such as oil filters, pop cans, etc?

- Yes, and I take pride in maintaining a clean operation and properly storing and disposing of trash.

What is an RMZ?

- An RMZ is an area adjacent to open water that have a different management prescription than surrounding uplands to address riparian resource needs.

What is a filter strip?

- A filter strip is an area of land adjacent to any open water and non-open water body that help trap and filter out sediment, debris, nutrients and chemicals.

What is a water diversion structure and where is it used?

- A water diversion structure, such as slash or a water bar, is installed across a trail or road to carry water runoff into vegetation, ditch or dispersion area so that it does not gain velocity and volume which cause soil movement and erosion.

What do you do in case of a spill?

- Contain what has been released, contact the state duty officer to report (petroleum spills of more than five gallons and any quantity of other chemicals) and then begin appropriate clean-up