

# INDUSTRY ALERT

## INJURY

### *Tree planter develops tendonitis from repetitive motions*

#### **What happened?**

A tree planter who had been working for five weeks experienced discomfort and pain in his right forearm in the early afternoon. He continued to work with the discomfort and pain in his forearm until he reported it to his supervisor at 5 p.m., when it was time to head back to camp.

#### **Why did it happen?**

The injury was caused by the combination of repetitive motions associated with driving the shovel into the ground and planting the seedlings. The outcome of this injury was tendonitis of the tree planter's right forearm, resulting in a lost-time injury.

#### **How can it be prevented?**

Tree planting is a very demanding job that requires good physical conditioning. Most new planters underestimate the amount of exertion that comes with the job and don't properly condition themselves. It's important that planters follow both pre-season and in-season training programs. These programs should include strengthening and cardiovascular endurance, as well as stretches that mimic the movements they will be doing while planting. Planters also need adequate amounts of rest to allow muscles to recover after a hard day's work.

Areas of the body that take the majority of the strain in tree planting are the shoulders, elbows, forearms, wrists and the back of the hands. But it's also important to condition the upper and lower back, chest, buttock muscles and hamstrings, as they help stabilize the body while planting. Another way to reduce strain on the wrists is to alternate hands while working. It is also important for planters to change their style of planting based on the planting conditions they face.

Planters must ensure that their shovel is the correct size for them. If their shovel is too long or too short, their body will not be able to maintain the correct posture. The D type shovel is generally lighter, but it forces planters to bend their wrist. A straight-handle shovel allows planters to keep their wrists straight, thereby reducing some of the stress on the joints. For experienced planters, the ultimate choice of shovel will be based on personal preference. Planters should immediately report any signs of pain or discomfort, as it may be easier to correct any problems earlier than later.

OFSWA has developed an Internet-based training program for tree planters, SafePlanting.com, as well as a series of health and safety information guides for tree planters. For more information, call (705) 474-7233, ext. 267.

[www.ofswa.on.ca](http://www.ofswa.on.ca)



Although the description of circumstances arises from an actual situation, this Industry Alert does not reflect the final analysis of the situation, nor is it meant to assign blame on the part of any person or member firm. For further information, contact OFSWA at 705-474-7233. For details on Ministry of Labour prosecutions regarding recent health and safety incidents in Ontario workplaces, visit [www.labour.gov.on.ca](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca) and click on "News Releases".