

Thursday March 26, 2015

Forest Industry Safety Summit 2015 delivers stark reminder on importance of safety in forestry

The annual Forest Industry Safety Summit, sponsored by VicForests, this year hosted in Melbourne, delivered a moving and powerful reminder on the importance of keeping forest industry employees safe at work.

The event brought together forestry organisations from around Australia for two days to showcase new practices, systems and tools for improving forest safety and to focus on practical safety outcomes.

Key note speakers included Ivan Pupalidy, Director of the Office for Learning with the US Forest Service, and Reynold Hert, Chairman and CEO of British Columbia Forest Safety Council.

Nathan Trushell, VicForests' General Manager Planning said a particularly moving presentation with a powerful safety message was delivered by Wiremu Lee Edmonds, from New Zealand.

Mr Edmonds is a fifth generation forest worker who spoke about tragically losing his son in a harvesting incident in 2013.

"It was a stark, confronting and very personal story that Mr Edmonds delivered to industry attendees on what can go wrong and the tragic impact it has on loved ones.

"It is an incredible story of tragedy but also of strength and courage and the need for every one of us to 'stand in the gap' to tackle workplace safety.

"This story had such a profound impact that we plan to invite Mr Edmonds over from New Zealand to VicForests to talk to our staff and contractors about his experience," said Mr Trushell.

Robert Green, VicForests' Chief Executive Officer, also made a presentation showing the substantial progress VicForests, its staff and contractors have made towards the organisation's goal of Zero Harm to all workers.

Mr Green said, "The summit was a great success and included a line-up of world class speakers from North America, New Zealand and of course Australia. It was great to see participation, from harvesting contractors to CEOs, all in the same room and sharing the same messages.

"We are incredibly proud to be able to sponsor what we see as a crucial event in the forestry industry's calendar. We need to keep striving to improve safety practices and keep people aware that a job in forestry can be, and often is, dangerous," he said.

"In 2014 we achieved 10 out of 12 months of zero harm which is an improvement on last year and helps us strive towards our core aim to have every single worker return safely home each day.

"We have had some proud safety achievements this year but we can never be complacent and always need to strive for better safety outcomes," said Mr Green.