

Detailed guide: Report suspected illegal tree felling

Before anyone can cut down trees, they may need to get a felling licence from the Forestry Commission. In some circumstances, exceptions or other permissions may apply. Illegal tree felling is described as 'unlicensed'.

If you suspect an illegal felling incident that you'd like to report to the Forestry Commission, you can contact your [local Area office](#).

You can choose to make your report of an alleged illegal felling anonymously if you prefer.

Before you report

Before you let us know about the tree felling, note that some tree felling does not require a felling licence from the Forestry Commission. For example:

- felling trees in gardens, churchyards or a public open space where the public have a legal right of access for recreation
- felling trees to prevent the spread of a quarantine pest or disease
- felling trees with a diameter less than the width of baked bean can (8cm) at a height of 1.3m on the main stem

Up to 5 cubic metres of timber (approximately 5 metric tonnes) may be felled per calendar quarter without a felling licence.

For more information on exemptions, see the guide on [when to apply for a tree felling licence](#).

What could happen if a tree is cut down without a licence

If no felling licence or other valid permission is in place, or if the wrong trees are cut down:

- all parties involved can be prosecuted
- the Forestry Commission can serve a Restocking Notice to re-stock the land concerned, or any other land as may be agreed, regardless of whether or not a prosecution takes place
- the owner or tenant must maintain the replacement trees to acceptable standards for up to 10 years

If someone fells trees without a licence, and they get an annual agri-environment scheme payment on their land, they might be penalised financially. Any failure to comply with the licensing controls is a breach under the Cross Compliance rules (GAEC 7a).

If anyone tries to sell illegally felled timber, they might be committing an offence under the Timber and Timber Products (Placing on the Market) Regulations 2013. A breach of these regulations means that the illegally felled timber can be seized by an authorised inspector. Anyone convicted of an offence under these regulations could get an unlimited fine and/or term of imprisonment.

If the restocking requirements of either a felling licence or a restocking notice are not complied with, the Forestry Commission may issue an Enforcement Notice requiring action be taken to meet the conditions previously set. It's an offence not to comply with an Enforcement Notice and a fine may be imposed.