

Forestry Worker interview questions

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What to expect

Forestry Worker interviews focus on your practical skills, safety awareness and ability to work outdoors in a team. Employers want to know you can handle the physical demands and follow environmental rules.

- **Safety and compliance:** Questions about your approach to safety, WHS procedures, and environmental regulations.
- **Technical and practical:** Questions about your experience with chainsaws, pruning, thinning, and machinery.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Questions that put you in a realistic forestry situation, such as a blocked firebreak or a hazard.
- **Behavioural and teamwork:** Questions about working with others, reliability, and managing physical demands.

The interview usually starts with a phone screen, then a face-to-face with a supervisor. Some employers include a practical assessment, such as a chainsaw safety check or a site walk-through. You may also need to complete a fitness test or show relevant tickets.

1. Can you describe your approach to safety when operating a chainsaw in remote areas?

Why they ask

Safety is the top priority in forestry, and employers need to know you follow protocols every time.

How to structure your answer

This is a process question, so give a step-by-step walk-through of your routine.

Example answer

"When I operate a chainsaw, I start with a pre-start check: I inspect the chain, bar, fuel and oil levels, and ensure the chain brake works. I put on my personal protective equipment: helmet, visor, hearing protection, gloves, chaps and boots. I assess the site for hazards like dead branches, overhead wires or steep ground. I plan my escape route before cutting. While cutting, I keep a firm stance, avoid cutting above shoulder height, and take breaks to avoid fatigue. If I'm in a remote area, I carry a first aid kit and a communication device. After the job, I clean and sharpen the chain and report any issues."

2. What experience do you have with pruning and thinning trees?

Why they ask

Pruning and thinning are core tasks, and they want to hear about your hands-on skills.

How to structure your answer

This is a technical question, so describe your techniques and equipment with a specific example.

Example answer

"I have pruned and thinned trees in both plantation and native forest settings. For pruning, I use a pruning saw or chainsaw to remove lower branches, cutting close to the trunk without damaging the collar. I focus on dead, diseased or crossing branches to improve tree health. For thinning, I select trees to remove based on spacing and growth, usually leaving the best stems. I mark trees with tape before cutting, then fell them safely, aiming them away from retained trees. I also treat stumps to prevent regrowth. I've worked on a 20-hectare plantation, thinning to a target spacing and improving the stand."

3. You notice a firebreak is blocked by fallen debris during a high fire danger day. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your judgement under pressure and your ability to act safely in an emergency.

How to structure your answer

This is a scenario question, so use a judgement-under-pressure structure: assess, act, report.

Example answer

"If I found a firebreak blocked on a high fire danger day, I would first assess the situation. If it's safe to clear, I'd use a chainsaw or hand tools to remove the debris quickly, making sure I have an escape route and someone knows where I am. If the debris is too large or unsafe, I'd report it immediately to my supervisor and request support. I'd also check if the blockage affects access for fire trucks. I'd document the issue and ensure it's cleared as a priority. My main goal is to restore the firebreak before any fire risk escalates."

4. Tell me about a time you worked as part of a team to complete a forestry task.

Why they ask

Forestry work is almost always done in teams, and they want to see you collaborate and communicate.

How to structure your answer

This is a behavioural question, so use the STAR method: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"In a previous role, we had to plant 2000 seedlings in a week. I worked with a team of four. We split the area into blocks, and I took responsibility for marking planting spots with GPS. Each morning we'd plan the day, then work in pairs. If someone fell behind, we'd help them catch up. At the end of each day, we checked the count and adjusted. We finished ahead of schedule and the seedlings had a good survival rate. I learned that clear communication and helping each other makes a big difference."

5. How do you ensure you don't harm native vegetation when clearing weeds?

Why they ask

Environmental compliance is essential, and they need to know you can identify and protect native plants.

How to structure your answer

This is a technical and environmental question, so explain your process and awareness.

Example answer

"When controlling weeds, I first identify the target species and check for native vegetation. I use a brushcutter or hand tools to remove weeds, avoiding damage to nearby native plants. If I need to use herbicide, I follow the label and only spray the target weeds, using a shield if necessary. I avoid working near waterways or in sensitive areas without guidance. I record what I've done and report any unusual plants or animals. I also clean my equipment before moving to a new area to prevent spreading weed seeds."

6. This role involves heavy lifting and working in all weather. How do you manage your physical stamina?

Why they ask

The job is physically demanding, and they want to know you can handle the workload safely.

How to structure your answer

This is a behavioural and self-awareness question, so give examples of how you stay fit and manage fatigue.

Example answer

"I stay physically fit by exercising regularly and eating well. On the job, I pace myself, take short breaks to stretch and hydrate, and use correct lifting techniques. In hot weather, I start early and take breaks in the shade. In cold or wet conditions, I wear layers and keep moving. I listen to my body and speak up if I need a rest. I've worked 10-hour days in remote areas and managed my energy by staying hydrated and focusing on the task."