QTRA Tree Safety Management System

Issue 17, January 2015

Newsletter

and events calendar

QTRA & Visual Tree Assessment – Estimating Probability of Failure Training

QTRA Version 5

QTRA V5 has recently celebrated its first birthday and the feedback we've been getting is overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic. Many are telling us they not only find QTRA V5 easier to use, but also easier to explain to their clients. Not wishing to rest on our laurels, we're always looking to improve QTRA. The feedback from users over the last year, at update workshops, and in topics raised on discussion forums, are valuable fuel for QTRA development. By way of improving the support and guidance we give, we're planning an update to the User Manual this year and any proposals you might have would be very welcome. Please email admin@qtra.info with your suggestions.

Amber - Tolerable by Agreement

If you are a QTRA user, could you please

let us know if you have encountered, or do encounter, any amber Tolerable (by agreement) trees where some form of risk control is NOT undertaken? In other words, where the Risk of Harm is amber and the tree is retained because it has exceptional value and those exposed to the risk agree to accept it, and no tree work is undertaken to reduce the risk to yellow Tolerable, or green Acceptable.

Same but Different

'The Practitioner's Guide to Visual Tree Assessment' workshop is paired with QTRA training, and sometimes run as a standalone day. The workshop has gradually evolved since its origins, which were driven by an interest in how Mike Ellison used the hammer to map decay. Since we started benchmarking Probability of Failure ranges in version 4 of QTRA, it has become readily apparent that the Probability of Failure exercises in the field, where delegates practice and calibrate their estimates, is one of the most valued parts of the day. In light of this evolution, we've decided it's time to review and rename the workshop, 'Visual Tree Assessment – Estimating Probability of Failure', to better convey the benefits of the day.

Who will benefit from attending the 'Visual Tree Assessment' day? We strongly recommend anyone attending QTRA training also attend the 'Visual Tree Assessment' workshop because of the additional Probability of Failure exercises. We're finding that even experienced arboriculturists, who are comfortable with their VTA skills, are taking away a greater understanding of, and confidence in, estimating Probability of Failure.

Subscribe to Newsletter

Quantified Tree Risk Assessment Ltd, 9 Lowe Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 7NJ

T: +44(0)1625 618999 E: admin@qtra.info W: www.qtra.info

Events Calendar

Australia

QTRA Training

02 March - Canberra

10 March - Brisbane

18 March - Hobart

25 March - Sydney

Visual Tree Assessment - Estimating Probability of Failure Training

03 Mar - Canberra

11 Mar - Brisbane

19 Mar - Hobart

26 Mar - Sydney

QTRA Update Training

12 Mar - Brisbane

20 Mar - Hobart

27 Mar - Sydney

Subscribe to Newsletter

Additionally, those coming along with a limited knowledge of trees are keen to pick up hazard recognition skills, and come away with an improved self-confidence in their own tree 'risk intelligence' (Issue 15 Newsletter), and when it's reasonable to call in a more experienced arboriculturist.

Here are the updated details of what the day is all about.

Visual Tree Assessment - Estimating Probability of Failure Workshop

Probability of Failure is the most uncertain and assessor dependent part of a tree risk assessment. What we focus on in the 'Visual Tree Assessment' workshop are the underlying biomechanical principles that help the risk assessor estimate the Probability of Failure in broad ranges. During the day we explore how decay fungi colonise trees, discover how trees with good vitality are structurally self-optimising, examine the limitations of strength loss formulae, and show how to map decay and sound wood with the Thor 710 hammer. The afternoon field exercises provide an invaluable opportunity for attendees to develop, hone, and 'calibrate' many more Probability of Failure estimates than can be covered on the QTRA day alone.

Attendees come away from the Visual Tree Assessment day with a greater understanding of how trees fail, and importantly, how they remain standing. Such underpinning knowledge significantly improves their confidence in estimating the ranges of Probability of Failure in QTRA, which are one of the foundations of a robust tree risk assessment.

Discovering La Perche - The Big Oak

A little gem sent to us by a QTRA user who photographed this information board next to the tree.

"This oak was planted by Jeanne, Baroness Meaucé, with her fiancé Sir Olivier Montlandon before he went to war to defend his country against the English in September 1360. Olivier was killed at the battle of Cocherelle four years later. Jeanne, frail, died of grief.

Several centuries ago, the Perche region was more heavily wooded than today. Henri IV, a great traveller and avid hunter, spent his days in the area to hunt and, it seems, his evenings at the foot of the oak tree. He was crowned king at the Chartres cathedral as he was a Protestant by birth.

When a dead branch failed, a cavity appeared in the form of a cave. The ladies of that time placed a statue of the Holy Virgin inside and candles at the foot of the tree. The oak became a place of prayer.

From then on, the tree was known as 'the oak of the Virgin Mary.' Then came the revolution, and as the ladies did not want to remove the statue, permission was asked for in order to fell the oak. However, they had to give up as the wood was too tough to cut. The ladies thought the Virgin Mary had protected them, therefore they replaced a statue in the tree. This custom was lost around 60 to 70 years ago.

Today this oak with an 8.6 metre circumference is famous in the region with more than six centuries of life."

Events Calendar

United Kingdom & Eire
QTRA Training
14 April - Bath
21 April - Macclesfield
28 April - York
11 May - Dublin
12 May - Cambridge
19 May - London

Visual Tree Assessment - Estimating Probability of Failure Training
15 Apr - Bath
22 Apr - Macclesfield
29 Apr - York
12 May - Dublin
13 May - Cambridge
20 May - London

The training calendar for the first half of 2015 in now on the QTRA website.

Subscribe to Newsletter

Would you take this bet?

Below is a video that was shared by a QTRA user, and for anyone interested in the perception and management of risk, it is well worth watching to the end.

It highlights two important points. Firstly, while we might understand the general principle that the risk from a particular activity is low, or that a particular gamble is either beneficial or at worst neutral, we have difficulty applying that understanding to specific situations. In the video people are offered a bet with a neutral risk, and why would you engage if you are as likely to lose as you are to win. But then the bet is gradually adjusted in the audience's favour, and it is only when it has been explained that the risk is heavily in their favour do the audience begin to accept the bet. We do the same when we assess risks from trees. We might know that the risk of tree failure in a given situation is very low and that the risk of harm arising from it is even lower, but have a tendency to consider the worst that could happen, rather than the QTRA approach of considering all of the possibilities - the least worst as well as the worst scenario.

The second interesting point that comes out of this video is that there appears to be a tipping point when the bet is weighted in the region of ten to one in favour of the audience. It is around this point that people seem to become sufficiently confident in taking the bet. The individual's 'risk thermostat' will largely determine how they balance the risks and the benefits in a given situation, and indeed whether they consider the balance in any detail at all. But when tree managers and tree experts are making judgments on behalf of the public and their clients, surely there is a responsibility to give due consideration to that balance, and avoid the pitfall of focusing on the potential loss to the detriment of the benefits?

Click here to view the video

Quantified Tree Risk Assessment Ltd, 9 Lowe Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 7NJ

T: +44(0)1625 618999 E: admin@qtra.info W: www.qtra.info