

Tree Risk Assessment Workshops

Sharing Expertise in Assessing Tree Risk With Partners

The Challenge

Trees are susceptible to injury from insects, disease, vandalism, soil compaction, poor pruning, and extreme weather events. These injuries can contribute to cumulative tree stress that can lead to tree decline and ultimately to tree failure. Trees in high use areas are especially vulnerable to cumulative stresses and are the most likely to cause the greatest harm when they fail. The need is great for professionals to acquire the training to comprehensively address tree risk.

The Solution

After releasing “[Urban Tree Risk Management: A Community Guide to Program Delivery and Implementation](#)” (NA-TP-03-03), the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry (NA S&PF) began supporting train-the-trainers workshops throughout the Northeast and Midwest States. When the Allegheny and Monongahela National Forest staffs expressed interest in the training, the NA S&PF Forest Health staff developed a 2-day training session designed to meet the needs of land managers responsible for highly visited public lands and recreation areas.

The training included a panel discussion on liability issues related to tree risk. NA S&PF Forest Health staff provided training on tree biology, insect pests, tree disease, and an overview of the components of a tree risk assessment program. Participants learned how to complete tree assessments that focus on how tree species, tree form, insect and disease damage, and other injuries all might contribute to structural decline. Participants then learned how to consider tree health within a formula that considers the likelihood of a tree striking a nearby target and the size of defective tree parts in determining tree risk rating.

Resulting Benefits

Workshop attendees learned how to assess tree risk using a systematic and proven methodology while gaining field



*A workshop attendee learns how to assess a tree for risk.
Photo by: Donna Murphy*

experience from knowledgeable trainers. Recognizing how tree location and size of the part of the tree that might fail contribute to risk and documenting these findings are the first step in developing a comprehensive tree risk program. Attendees now understand the value in having a proactive tree risk assessment program that prioritizes management actions like pruning and tree removals. Attendees also understand that tree risk management improves the health of a tree population and ensures greater visitor safety. Many left the training with the intention of developing tree risk assessment programs on the lands they manage.

Sharing Success

Along with National Forest employees, workshop attendees included the U.S Army Corps of Engineers, National Radio Astronomy Observatory, West Virginia Department of Natural Resources, the Nature Conservancy, the Cacapon Institute, and Elkins City (WV) Parks and Recreation Department.

Tree risk should be given the same priority as assessing the safety of streets, underground utilities, and buildings.



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