

Safety Alert OF THE MONTH

PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS IN BC'S FOREST INDUSTRY

March 2018

Managing Wildlife/Dangerous Trees

Introduction

Recent wildfires and beetle infestations have created large areas of dead and potentially unstable trees. What is the best way to manage the dangerous trees that could fall and hurt workers while keeping the valuable wildlife trees standing? Have a look at the following information for guidance.

Thanks to the Wildlife Tree Committee for the information in this alert.

What is a Dangerous Tree?

A Dangerous Tree is defined by the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (section 26.1) to be *any tree, live or dead, that is hazardous to workers because of:*

- *Location,*
- *Lean,*
- *Physical damage,*
- *Overhead hazards,*
- *Deterioration of limbs or root system, or*
- *A combination of the above.*

For most forestry activities, a dangerous tree will be a tree that has been damaged by fire, insects, disease, weather or other disturbance.

What is a Wildlife Tree?

A wildlife tree is any standing dead or live tree with special characteristics that provide valuable habitat for the conservation or enhancement of wildlife. The special characteristics (known as habitat features) are often defects in trees that provide opportunities for wildlife that can include feeding, nesting, shelter, overwintering or hibernation, and perching.

The habitat features commonly observed include spike, fork and broken tops, cavities, loose bark, large platform limbs and brooms. Depending on their cause of death, specific tree defects and condition, and the type of work activity, some wildlife trees can be dangerous.

Levels of Disturbance and Training Required

Work activities can be classified by the amount of disturbance they create. The higher the disturbance level, the higher the chance of a dangerous tree breaking



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up and causing an incident. Activities that have higher disturbance levels require higher levels of training to assess and manage wildlife and dangerous trees.

Level of Disturbance	Example of Work Activities	Level of Training Required
Very Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest surveys, stand recce, tree marking, road & cutblock layout, foot travel • General light vehicle travel (pick-ups, ATV's) 	Awareness Training
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tree planting • brushing • tree pruning (stems <20 cm dbh) • use of light-duty machinery (e.g. brush saws) • Heavy (<5500 GVWR) vehicle travel on a constructed and maintained resource road • fire control with hand tools and/or water hoses 	Qualified Person Training
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy (>5500 GVWR) vehicle travel on a trail or overgrown road • maintenance or construction activities without heavy equipment (e.g. small machines such as "bobcats") • tree pruning (stems >20 cm dbh) • juvenile spacing or slashing (stems <15 cm dbh) • tree bucking 	Dangerous Tree Assessor Training
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tree falling (any tree >15 cm dbh) • cable yarding • ground skidding • mechanical harvesting and forwarding • helicopter logging (lift <2200 kg) with workers exposed to rotor wash • use of light and intermediate helicopters where workers are exposed to rotor wash (e.g. helipads) • mechanical site preparation with heavy machinery • maintenance or construction activities with heavy equipment 	Dangerous Tree Assessor Training
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trees adjacent to corridors in partial-cut cable logging operations • harvesting operations in structurally damaged stands (e.g. wildfire burns) • blasting • helicopter logging (lift >2200 kg) with workers exposed to rotor wash • use of medium and heavy helicopters where workers are exposed to rotor wash 	Dangerous Tree Assessor Training

Wind speed is an important factor when assessing wildlife/dangerous trees. When the wind speed increases, it may be necessary to stop work, or increase the Level of Disturbance category for the site which will increase the level of assessment required. Use the following table as a guide:



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Table 2A. Influence of wind speed on level of disturbance

Wind Speed (km/h)	Description	Level of Disturbance Equivalency
0 – 40	0-20 km/h: light breeze (dust and loose paper raised; small branches move) to 20- 40 km/h: fresh breeze (small trees sway; tops of large trees sway)	1 – 2
40 – 65	strong breeze (small branches fly in the air; whole tree in motion; resistance felt when walking against wind)	3
65+	gale (branches broken off trees; walking impeded)	4

Most planning and survey work that is done on foot is in the “very low” level of disturbance category. The type of training that is required is a review of dangerous tree characteristics and wind shutdown criteria so crews can maintain their situational awareness and stay out of hazardous areas. Use the resources on the Wildlife Committee’s website for this information.

For many silviculture operations (Level of Disturbance 1), the full dangerous tree assessment training may not be required; having qualified person training may be sufficient. This training can be done in-house by an experienced dangerous tree assessor using the training materials found on the Wildlife Tree Committee’s website. Suspect trees with hazard indicators must be assessed and dangerous trees managed before work commences.

For most logging operations suspect and dangerous trees are often removed concurrently. However, it is advisable to have an assessment done prior to harvesting to identify valuable wildlife trees that would be safe to leave standing. Especially because some wildlife trees are protected by law. Remember, a full dangerous tree assessment is required if suspect trees are to be left standing within the work site.

Resources:

1) Wildlife Tree Committee Publications

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/wildlife-habitats/wildlife-tree-committee/publications>

2) SAFER Dangerous Tree Assessment Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZX52D49QBg>

3) Dangerous Tree Assessment Training Information

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/wildlife-habitats/wildlife-tree-committee/assessor-s-courses>

