

Tree Risk Assessment Best Management Practices: Pre-Conference Workshop

A tree risk assessment is the technical process of assessing an individual tree for event-level risk. Tree risk management is a process for managing risk at the system-level, that is, for the whole tree population. Each risk level requires unique inputs, expertise, understanding, and training. Both play an integral role in the development of reasonable, practical, and defensible programs for both public or private entities that maintain or manage trees. This pre-conference workshop focuses on refining participant skills in tree risk assessments and incorporating them into overall company or agency policies.

The engaging workshop will be conducted outside. A workshop packet will be provided that includes handouts, policy examples and exercises. After a brief discussion on risk management concepts, the structure of the course has been designed to begin by implementing a simple inspection program followed by more elevated assessment processes. Participants will assess twenty trees from which the group will select trees for a more elevated assessment.

Topics will include:

Tree Risk Management – This opening session will provide context for participants. Risk concerns uncertainty and it is primarily managed over time. A fundamental understanding is that risk can never be completely eliminated if the client or community are to enjoy the benefits of trees. Risk is managed by identifying and managing to a risk threshold. A risk management framework and a model known as “As Low as Reasonably Practical for Trees” will be presented.

The Tree Risk Assessment Process – This session will provide a five-step method for conducting a risk assessment. The purpose is provide participants with a tool for conducting a thorough assessment that demonstrates due diligence.

Level 1 – Limited Visual Assessment – The limited visual assessment is a powerful tool for arborists and managers because it provides a process for managing the risk of a large number of trees cost effectively and proportionate to the risk. This session will have participants assess a large number of trees using the limited visual assessment methodology provided. The focus will be on identifying visually obvious issues.

Level 2 – Basic Assessment – The next level of assessment is of a higher order where assessors evaluate four factors: likelihood of a tree-part failure, a time frame for the failure to occur, the likelihood of target impact, and consequences. Each component will be discussed, and procedural handouts will be provided. The outcome of a level 2 assessment is a risk rating and recommended mitigation measures. Participants will assess five trees from the initial group using the Basic Assessment methodology. Each tree will receive a risk rating and mitigation recommendation by each participant.

Level 3 – Advanced Assessments – An advanced assessment uses specialized tools or techniques for informing on a specific tree or target issue where more information may be required. It’s purpose is to better inform on an assessors opinion and/or a tree owners mitigation choices. This outdoor exercise will have participants assess one of the tree trees using resistance drill, tomography, and other tools.

Mitigation Prioritization – Mitigating risk focuses on assigning resources by prioritizing the levels of risk encountered. This session will provide policy narratives on mitigation responsiveness for the twenty trees assessed and how they can demonstrate due diligence.

Tree Risk Assessment Policies – This session will outline a tree risk assessment policy. The purpose is to present a reasonable program that is proportionate to the risk that exists.