



October Newsletter

Become a licensed user



UK Training Calendar

QTRA Training

02/11/2011 Sheffield

30/11/2011 Macclesfield

06/12/2011 Luton

Practitioners Guide to Visual Tree Assessment Training

01/11/2011 Sheffield

29/11/2011 Macclesfield

07/12/2011 Luton

Licensed User Update Training

28/11/2011 Macclesfield

QTRA Down Under

David Evans will be heading over to Australia in February and March 2012 to deliver some more QTRA, VTA and Update workshops. So far, the proposed venues will be Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, and possibly New Zealand. We'll confirm the dates in November. If you are interested please visit the QTRA website.

QTRA Update Workshops

The Update workshops were originally designed to provide an opportunity for those of you who had done the training, and then used QTRA, to come along and discuss any issues or fine-tune your understanding of the method and how it's put together. However, we're finding that many licensees are getting benefit from the day who, having not used it for a while, are simply rusty with QTRA and want to come along for a refresher. Whatever your needs, we're more than happy to accommodate them on the day. For those of you who are planning to come along to the Australian updates, David will be emailing you nearer the time to find out exactly what you hope to get out of the workshop, and tailoring the day accordingly. For those of you coming along to the UK days, please email Diane at admin@qtra.co.uk.

New User Manual & Practice Note

The new User Manual and Practice Note come into official use on 1st November 2011. So make a note to have a read through them when they arrive in your inbox. Those of you outside of the UK can get a sneak preview of the UK version, which is already available for download from the QTRA website under 'Publications'. We've put a lot of work into improving the contents of both, and are grateful to a number of you who took the time and effort to review the Practice Note. Some of the main revisions are under the bonnet, tying QTRA more closely into existing risk assessment and management policy best practice, and don't substantially affect how you drive it. The result is to make the principles underlying QTRA even more robust.

Training 2012

We are in the process of scheduling training dates for next year to include the UK, Australia, France and Hong Kong. All training events will be published on our website and sent out by email as soon as they are available



The Weather Factor

The most significant change in the guidance to those of you using QTRA in the field is how we deal with the way in which the weather influences pedestrian occupancy when calculating the Risk of Harm (RoH). We all know weather conditions can affect both the Probability of Failure (PoF) and pedestrian Target occupation at the same time, and therefore influence the RoH. A fairly typical example is that of a park during severe weather when the failure of trees is most likely to occur at a time when the occupancy by pedestrians is at its lowest. Consequently, an assessment based on an annual average occupation is likely to be a gross overestimate of risk. Up until now, we've had a 'Weather Factor' which was used at the discretion of the assessor to modify the RoH. The revised approach is to assess the Target occupation when the weather conditions are likely to significantly increase the likelihood of tree failure, so that a separate weather factor is no longer required.

The 1/10,000 Time Bomb (by David Evans)

This is an edited version of an email that I posted on the QTRA discussion forum, and it's repeated here because it covers some important points, and also reveals some of the new content of the Practice Note and User Manual in relation to the UK Health & Safety Executive's 'Tolerability of Risk framework' (ToR).

Mike Ellison and I attended the Arboricultural Association's annual conference in September, to man the QTRA stand, launch the new Practice Note, and catch up with licensees and folk who were interested in proportionate tree risk assessment. We saw Jeremy Barrell's presentation, 'Safety in Numbers - The 1:10,000 Time Bomb', which he also delivered at the ISA conference in Parramatta earlier this year. Jeremy's a QTRA licensee and amongst the typical mayhem of conference I did manage to catch up with him briefly to chat about the presentation. I particularly liked the first part of the title "Safety in numbers" because it champions quantification of risk in a similar manner to the marvellous Lord Kelvin quote we have under the title of the new Practice Note.

What seemed to be Jeremy's main point was that in his recent experience small diameter branches were causing injuries, resulting in claims, and the risk attached to these injuries was less than 1/10,000 but more than 1/1,000,000 – for those of you who are not familiar, these are two important threshold values in ToR, which you can read more about in the Practice Note. It struck me there are two issues here.

Firstly, just because a risk is realised, and someone is unfortunate enough to be harmed, it does not follow that the risk was therefore unacceptable and someone is liable.

Secondly, Jeremy argued that if the RoH from a tree fell between 1/10,000 and 1/1,000,000, into the As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP) region of the ToR, then tree owners/managers might still be held liable if the cost of reducing that risk to 1/1,000,000 was 'proportionate' and 'reasonably practicable'. He is right about this, but as ever the devil is in the detail. How 'proportionate' is the cost of reducing the risk, and is it 'reasonably practicable'? All these elements were addressed in previous Practice Notes, but the new version adds clarity, explains better how QTRA fits in with ToR, and includes a worked example to specifically address this issue. If you look at Example 3 on page 8, you can see how little has to be spent before the costs of risk reduction become grossly disproportionate. In the example, where the RoH is 1/62,000, the cost of identifying the risk in the first place is likely to blow the budget of £16.12 and would therefore be grossly disproportionate. Furthermore, it would be grossly disproportionate without even considering the costs in terms of the benefits lost to the risk control (the tree work), or the risk to the contractor or public in undertaking the work. The reasonable cost of control is at its highest when a risk of 1/10,000 is being reduced to 1/1,000,000 or less where it is £100.00, it drops to £50.00 at 1/20,000, and by the time we're at a level of risk as low as 1/100,000 a proportionate cost of control is £10.00.

Time bomb defused.

Felbrigg Hall

There was an interesting Judgment made earlier this year in a case of Harry Bowen and Others v The National Trust. It relates to the tragic accident that occurred at Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk, UK, when a large



branch from a European beech tree (*Fagus sylvatica*) failed during a school trip, killing one child and badly injuring three others. The Judge found in favour of the Defendants (The National Trust), who were deemed to have been reasonable in how they managed their tree risk. One of the things that is particularly interesting about the case is the Defendant's expert, Dr David Lonsdale, used QTRA and ToR when assessing the likely level of risk and whether that was ALARP before the accident. There is also an exchange of opinions between the experts about QTRA. These elements are contained in the expert reports, and presently we're in the process of determining how much of this content is in the 'public domain' and can be uploaded onto the QTRA website for you guys to have a look at. We'll announce on the QTRA discussion forum when they're available.

QTRA Forum Lurkers (by David Evans)

It has been suggested to me there may be a number of licensees out there who are anxious about posting to the QTRA forum because they're worried about looking silly with their questions. I've always considered the QTRA forum to be an open and largely friendly place to hang out; even when the debates do go into minutiae and esoteric nooks and crannies that won't be of interest to many. However, it should be a place where there is no such thing as a 'dumb' question. We take the stance that if you have any question about QTRA then it is not 'dumb' to ask it. Anyone who has any anxiety about posting should rest assured that it is to their credit they have asked a question. Despite these reassurances, I know it might still be a worrying thing to do for some, and if is the case, you could always email me directly david.evans@arborcentre.co.uk, and I'll ask the question anonymously. It would be great to see some new faces on the discussion forum, and there's a splendid opportunity to chat about the new Practice Note and User Manual when they're released in November.

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