



Events Calendar

UNITED KINGDOM

Wakefield

26 Feb 2014 - QTRA Update

Cardiff

04 March 2014 - QTRA Training

05 March 2014 - VTA Training

Chorley

08 April 2014 - QTRA Training

09 April 2014 - VTA Training

10 April 2014 - QTRA Update

Glasgow

29 April 2014 - QTRA Training

30 April 2014 - VTA Training

Guildford

29 April 2014 - QTRA Training

30 April 2014 - VTA Training

1 May 2014 - QTRA Update

Cheltenham

06 May 2014 - QTRA Training

07 May 2014 - VTA Training

08 May 2014 - QTRA Update

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Training Calendar 2014

Dates and venues for QTRA training, updates for **Version 5**, and **Practitioner's Guide to Visual Tree Assessment (VTA)** workshops, for the first half of 2014 have now been finalised for Australia and UK. Australian venues include Tasmania for the first time, as well as the regular locations of Adelaide and Melbourne. Mike Ellison is currently down under covering other Australian venues and New Zealand. In the UK, we have a number of locations in all four countries.



Version 5 Software Applications for Free

With the official launch of QTRA Version 5, we are very pleased to announce that Registered Users will be entitled to one FREE installation of the software calculator on a Windows operating system, AND one FREE installation on an Android or (when completed) iOS mobile device. At the time of this Newsletter going to print the software has a few minor tweaks that need to be ironed out before it is released, and we will notify you by email as soon as you can download it.

Probability of Failure Benchmarking & Calibration

Target, Target, Target

First, let us re-affirm the context. We refer to QTRA as being 'Target-led' tree risk assessment to distinguish it from the usual 'defect-led' approach. We do this because the Target component of a tree risk assessment is the most important input since it is a combination of both the Likelihood and Consequences

part of, $\text{Risk} = \text{Likelihood} \times \text{Consequences}$. Furthermore, the primary importance of Target range in QTRA allows our clients to be cost-effective by prioritising their resources and our efforts in assessing and managing tree risk where the risk has the greatest potential to be 'unacceptable'. This approach makes far more sense than focusing on trying to find the most significant defects, where Target values may be sufficiently low that an assessment of the tree in any detail is not required to determine that the risk is 'tolerable' or 'acceptable'. Another reason for the primacy of Targets is that these are the inputs we can be most accurate, objective, and have the greatest confidence with.

Probability of Failure

On the other hand, estimating the Probability of Failure (PoF) range is the most subjective element of a tree risk assessment, the most dependent on the skill of the assessor, and has the greatest level of uncertainty. The feedback we've had from QTRA training and updates with Version 5, and the VTA workshops this autumn in the UK has been overwhelmingly positive and informative. We have found the training has been particularly useful in relation to estimating PoF, where the aim has been to improve consistency through consensus. Though we've adopted this approach for a few years now, one of the areas we've developed and refined in the Version 5 of QTRA and VTA training is spending more time in the field on 'calibrating' PoF range estimates with the delegates using 'benchmarks'.



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Events Calendar

IRELAND

Belfast

12 May 2014 - QTRA Training

13 May 2014 - VTA Training

AUSTRALIA

Hobart

04 March 2014 - QTRA Training

05 March 2014 - VTA Training

Adelaide

11 March 2014 - QTRA Training

12 March 2014 - VTA Training

13 March 2014 - QTRA Update

Melbourne

17 March 2014 - QTRA Training

18 March 2014 - VTA Training

19 March 2014 - QTRA Update

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Benchmarking & Calibration

What we have found is that by starting off with PoF range 1 and PoF range 7 as our 'benchmarks', by the end of each day we're getting very good consistency with the PoF range selected. The majority of delegates end up within the same PoF range, and those that are selecting a different PoF only vary by one range. I think there's a number of reasons for this improvement in guidance and application.

Firstly, with benchmarks there is something to anchor an opinion to and then 'jump' either up or down the PoF ranges. This jumping of a PoF range from a benchmark requires a consideration of the reasons to justify that increase or decrease. It stimulates self-critical thinking in order to provide a reasoned explanation behind the jump.

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, on the training days delegates have a rare opportunity to compare and discuss opinions about PoF ranges founded on the wide range of experience and knowledge everyone attending brings along with them. This 'wisdom of the crowd' aspect of the training enables attendees to 'calibrate' their PoF knowledge about the features that affect tree stability, and gives them the confidence their estimates are shared by their peers.



It's been very instructive to look at a tree, or branch, get everyone to form an independent opinion about what PoF range they think it falls within, and then get a show of hands. The reasons why a particular PoF range has been selected are then discussed, along with all the factors that could affect it. A second show of hands based on the discussion and the first vote enables the calibration. Undertaking this calibration exercise a number of



times narrows the PoF ranges selected considerably, and the consistency is even more pronounced from those that attend both the QTRA and VTA days¹.

We're sure those of you who are planning to come along to QTRA, update, and VTA training will find these PoF calibration exercises extremely useful. Something to bear in mind when you do them though is to have an open mind. Changing your mind in the second vote, having had the chance to consider the PoF range selected by your peers in the first vote and the ensuing discussion, is a strength not a weakness. As Albert Einstein said, "The measure of intelligence is the ability to change."

¹One of the reasons for pairing the VTA day with QTRA is that on the VTA day we spend it exploring the underlying biological and biomechanical principles that determine which PoF range will be selected in the classroom and out in the field. After all, one of the reasons for undertaking a VTA in the first place is to determine the PoF range. For this reason, we highly recommend those that come along to QTRA training also attend the VTA day.



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