

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Hazard Tree Removal

Date: March 12, 2021

Location: Mark Twain National Forest,
Missouri

Falling a Hazard Tree with Rot on a District Compound

First-Person Account from the Hazard Tree Faller

Narrative

I was asked to cut a dead short leaf pine on the district office compound.

After sounding the hinge and boring the tree, I determined it had about 2 inches of rot all around the tree, but had solid heartwood. The tree had 1.5 feet of side lean toward a propane tank and storage shed. It also had approximately 2 feet of head lean toward the intended lay into the parking lot area.

I felt comfortable taking down the tree and proceeded with cutting. I did an open-face notch with a boring back cut. I placed my stump-shot a bit higher than usual. My thought was to take advantage of the solid heartwood I thought that I had.

After leaving a trigger for a release cut on the rear of the tree, I placed a wedge on my off-side and gently tapped it in. My intention was to place a wedge on my on-side to use as a driving wedge for finishing.

Right then I heard a pop and assumed that the trigger had released prematurely. The tree fell 90 degrees off its intended lay and struck a storage building that houses the district's dozer and transport. The entire hinge had broken when I placed my off-side wedge and the holding wood collapsed toward the side lean.

LESSONS

- ❖ I should have been more concerned with the rot around the tree and less confident in how solid my heartwood was.
- ❖ I am in the habit of placing my off-side wedge first. Even though I didn't pound it in, it was enough to compromise my hinge.
- ❖ Placing a wedge directly behind the apex of the leaning side first to replace the kerf and prevent the tree from pulling on the hinge may have prevented this incident.
- ❖ Additionally, there were ropes and mechanical advantage gear available that would have aided in felling the tree.
- ❖ I was overconfident that this was a straightforward tree that didn't present much technicality.
- ❖ As a temporary detailer here from the Black Hills National Forest, my unfamiliarity with local tree species on the Mark Twain and rot conditions may have been another contributing factor to this incident.



This RLS was submitted by:

Engine Captain

Do you have a Rapid Lesson to share?

Click this button:

**Share
Your Lessons**