

HAZARD TREE SAFETY



Idaho Panhandle National Forests



What is a Hazard Tree?

The risk posed by hazard trees is often overlooked.

A hazard tree is defined by:

- Potential risk of failure**
A tree or part of a tree has a defect that makes it predisposed to failure.
- Potential for damage**
A tree is located so that failure presents a threat to people or property.



What is Your Responsibility?

Land management agencies cannot remove all hazard trees in the vast public lands in Idaho, and typically they only attempt to remove hazard trees in developed areas with high public use. Visitors must be aware of the dangers of hazard trees and take precautions, especially in backcountry settings.



What is Your Risk?

Exposure time to hazard trees varies based on the amount of time visitors are in one location.

MINIMAL

- Hikers spend relatively little time in one place (perhaps one minute).

MODERATE

- Picnickers have more exposure (one to several hours).

MAXIMUM

- Campers have the longest exposure. (from many hours to many days). Thus, campers have the highest potential to encounter a hazard tree.



To Recognize a Hazard Tree...

...FIRST LOOK UP!



THINGS THAT SHOUT "WATCH OUT!"



dead trees



broken branches



material may fall from a tree



signs of disease



trees leaning more than 10°

- Dead trees (including those killed by fire insects and disease) are very dangerous.
- Broken hanging branches may fall unexpectedly.
- Material may fall from a tree (including nests) without warning.
- Signs of disease, especially mushrooms or conks (perennial fruiting bodies), are evidence of weakened tree structure.
- Leaning trees at greater than 10 degrees from vertical pose high potential for failure.
- Cracks in trunks and branches also indicate weakened tree structure.
- Soil heaving or uplift around roots indicates the tree may be ready to fall at any moment.



What You Can Do to Reduce Risk

Be observant! Examine trees in your camping or picnic area for evidence of hazard or failure potential. Take action by moving yourself and your belongings to a safe area if you suspect a hazard.



- Avoid all dead trees, hazardous trees and the danger zone in which they may fall.** Never picnic or camp close to a dead tree. It could fall at anytime without warning.

- Never underestimate the danger posed by small trees.** Dead trees or tree parts 6" in cross section have fallen and killed hikers and campers.



- Avoid trees with excessive lean (10 degrees or greater), or evidence of defect.** Move yourself and belongings to a safe area.

- Be especially cautious of hazard trees in strong winds.** Select a safe place to spend the night.



- Do not chop or bang into dead trees as the entire tree or top branches may fall on you.**

If you spot a hazardous tree in a developed recreation site please notify campground staff or your local US Forest Service office!