

Failure of a tree with symptoms of ash die back disease

Issued to: **All Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and accredited contractors.**

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Location: National

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Overview

On the 7th September during a routine inspection a mature ash tree showing signs of die back was found in a condition that posed an immediate risk of falling onto the railway line. The team was able to undertake immediate action to safeguard the railway and the tree was made safe.

Ash die back is a disease of ash trees that causes leaf loss and crown die back which can lead to the death of the tree in a relatively short space of time. The disease has spread throughout the UK and will lead to the decline and death of many ash trees alongside our railway.

As ash trees decline, they will become more susceptible to failure, increasing the risk of safety related incidents. Where mature trees have declined, additional and intensive risk controls and work methods will be required to make ash trees safe.

Discussion Points

- Are trees being checked during site visits and inspections?
- Do you and your teams know how to report hazardous trees, including reporting faults and dealing with incidents to protect the safety of the line? It is important to report hazardous trees and not assume they are being dealt with by off-track teams.
- Do you have access to inspection teams that can identify ash trees and the signs of ash die back? This information is important to collect information to assess the extent of the problem. How is this done and where?
- Do you have access to a resource to undertake work on trees? Specialist work methods and equipment might be required to deal with trees in poor health.