

# EQUIPMENT REVIEW



## TAJFUN FIREFWOOD PROCESSOR MODEL RCA 320

**The renewed popularity of wood as fuel has encouraged the development of some interesting new machinery, including the various tractor-mounted firewood processors. Foreign manufacturers are again strong in this particular market, and they have brought us some very functional notable machines.**

BY BILL GOVE

In past reviews we have discussed the tractor-mounted logging winches made by Tajfun, a machinery manufacturer located in the small country of Slovenia. This company has now introduced into the U.S. their line of tractor-mounted firewood processors.

Although the Tajfun firewood processor is relatively new to the market, I did find a couple of them hard at work here in the Northeast. Brian Richardson of Warren, Massachusetts, and his father are operating one of the few active dairy farms left

in central Massachusetts. With 80 head of stock, 50 of them now milking, they are able to find additional time to supplement their labor with other endeavors. One of these projects is the clearing of more open land for pasture and hay production, and producing firewood from the trees that they have been removing. One of the most unique aspects of their farm is its size, 500 acres in one piece right in the middle of an active semi-rural portion of busy Massachusetts.

Brian purchased a Tajfun tractor winch two or three years ago, which

*With his left hand holding down a clamp to prevent the logs from moving, Brian Richardson, operator of the RCA 320, controls the saw with his right hand.*

he says has proven to be quite satisfactory for his use around the farm, and, as a result, about two years ago purchased the first Tajfun firewood processor to be sold in the Northeast. It was late winter when I arrived, still a little snow on the ground, but it was ideal weather for cutting firewood. Brian mounted his firewood processor on the back of the tractor, and we took off across a few fields for the back portion of the property.

### A Compact Product

The processor fastens to the 3-point linkage system of the tractor and folds up very cleverly into a compact package for traveling. Arriving at the wood's edge, it did not take Brian and his father, Bob, very long to unfold the apparatus, and they were soon ready to operate.

The Richardsons have mounted their Tajfun processor on the back of an 85-hp John Deere tractor, a tractor which actually has much more power than is needed for the processor; 30 hp is the stated minimum power required. However, Brian told me that mounting the processor on the back of a tractor in the 40-hp to 50-hp range would undoubtedly present a problem for him during transport.

The weight of the Tajfun processor, with the optional discharge conveyor and the log-loading ramp attached, is over 2,300 pounds. With a



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**TAJFUN Firewood Processor**

**Model RCA 320**



*It takes only a short time to unfold the apparatus and set it up for work.*

smaller tractor, the front end would be off of the ground at times, and he would never be able to steer it across his rocky fields or even out on the town road. However, over-powering the tractor is not a problem in this case.

About all of the materials that Brian was processing were small trees from his land clearing on an old pasture—and this is the size that works best with his machine, the Tajfun Model RCA 320, the smaller

Overall length	17 ft. 7in.
Width	4 ft. 2 in.
Height	5 ft. 4 in.
Weight	2,327 lbs.
Sawbar	Oregon 15 in.
Max log length	11 ft.
Max log diameter	12 in.
Price (costs include optional lift table and discharge conveyer)	\$16,845

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**Manufacturer's Comments:** RCA 320-2 is able to buck and split logs up to 12 in. in diameter. The logs are loaded to the infeed conveyer and forwarded to the length limiter to be cut in lengths of 10 in. to 20 in. The cut wood falls into one of two splitting chutes where it is pushed against the 2-, 4-, or optional 6-way splitting wedge by a splitting cylinder with 10 tons of force. Dual piston splitting allows you to split and load as fast as the chunks can be cut off with direct gear-box-driven bar and chain. Completely self-contained, it does not rely on hydraulics from the tractor. The firewood is discharged through the 13 ft. conveyer. The machine processes two or more cords per hour.

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of the manufacturer's two models. The maximum wood diameter that will move through this processor is about 12 1/2 inches; the larger model can handle 15-inch wood. The tractor-mounted Tajfun is an excellent machine for applications such as the one that Brian is doing, but it is not designed for commercial use with larger diameter wood.

### Setup and Avoiding Annoyances

Setting up the processor was a fast and simple operation. As he did the hookups, Brian commented, "This attachment is very well engineered." Asked for an explanation, he demonstrated how well the segments fit together and praised the heavy duty litch pins used to secure them. I noticed that all of the pins are attached to the machine with a short chain.

Brian was selective about where he set up the processor. He has found that if the machine is not on fairly level ground, the log can give



*The two splitting cylinders work alternately as the wood is dropped first into one empty trough and then into the other. Here we see the two splitting cylinders and the wedge.*

him a little bit of annoyance when feeding into the saw and that the cut pieces can fall into the wrong splitting trough. The machine is provided with a hydraulically-driven belt, but the small, crooked wood they were cutting frequently needed a

boost to move along.

Brian soon realized that there were little things that could be done when cutting the trees that would help in operating the processor. Large protruding knots on small logs should be cut off flush with the

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stem; they kept annoying him when hanging up on the conveyer. Even the small twig-like branches should be clipped off with the chain saw; they would prevent a smooth feed on the conveyer. Annoyances are also avoided by placing the logs on the loading deck with the butt end toward the machine, especially with small trees. Brian chose to have the optional “log loader,” a feed table with a hydraulic log lift to raise the logs up to working height. The lift can handle about 1,200 pounds.

Safety factors are well engineered into the Tajfun processor, a feature which is very common with machines made in Europe and Scandinavia. The cage over the chain saw and splitting trough prevents placement of hands into the working area, but it didn't seem to hinder the operation at all, and it was easy to lift up out of the way. The machine automatically stops when the cage is raised.

The Tajfun system of using two splitting troughs is interesting and quite practical. The two splitting cylinders work alternately as the wood is dropped first into one empty trough and then into the other. This system allows the chain saw to start making the next cut before the previous block. Not that the operation was entirely smooth, however. Brian was cutting frozen wood on this day, and he got annoyed when the small, frozen pieces would occasionally bounce when hitting the bottom of the splitting trough, often causing them to become misaligned in the trough.

Upon completion of the job, Brian and his father quickly unhooked the drive shaft to the processor and folded up the machine for transport back to the barn. There was one difficult physical chore, however, when working alone. The log-loading deck had to be folded up, dragged over to the tractor, and lifted up onto the carrying bracket. The piece weighs 287 pounds.

When asked about his production rates, he told me that he does well

to get a cord per hour working alone with this smaller wood. He has done well over one cord with ideal wood. Firewood prices in his area during the winter of 2006–2007 were \$180–\$200 per cord, dry.

### A Consulting Forester's Tajfun

The other Tajfun Model RCA 320 that I tracked down and witnessed in action belonged to a consulting forester named Philip Hancock in South Windsor, Connecticut. Philip has been using the Tajfun for about three months as a “filler” activity in his timber management work.

He does his own tree harvesting and sorts the logs for the available markets, including a railroad tie mill. That leaves only the small material—most of it under 10 inches in diameter—for processing into firewood. But he finds it to be worthwhile.

Philip powers his processor with a 55-hp tractor. He explained that experience has shown him that he needs at least 40 hp to operate the processor, but probably at least 55 hp to pick up the machine and transport it.

When asked about performance, Philip praised the ability of the Tajfun processor to do the job well. At present he cuts about 100 cords per year, but hopes to increase that amount. Dry firewood is bringing \$175 per cord in his area.

My observation was that the Tajfun processor is a rugged, well-made machine that ranks admirably among the firewood processors on the market today. It probably is not the tool for ordinary work by a firewood professional. But if you are considering a processor for part-time work with relatively small wood and one that is portable with an easy set-up, consider a Tajfun portable, tractor-mounted firewood processor. ■

*Bill Gove is retired from a forestry career with private industry and with state government as a wood utilization specialist and lives in Williamstown, Vermont. He is a regular contributor and is the author of several books on the history of railroading and logging.*

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