



Tajfun RCA 480 Joy

Running a firewood business was once only for tough guys with chain saws, splitting mauls, and old pickup trucks. So why would the mother of a 9-year-old give up a perfectly good “office job” to cut, split, and deliver firewood? Jessica Perkins let her boyfriend (now fiancé) talk her into doing just that. “I used to work for a medical device company testing for FDA compliance, so it was a big change to go from that to this, but I never look back,” she recalled. “It was pretty scary, not knowing whether I’d like going from a nice office job to the firewood business. Driving the truck was the scariest part, but after a few days, it was nothing.”

Before bringing Jessica into the firewood business, Anson Baldwin decided that his current firewood processor was too complicated and dangerous, so he looked for something more user-friendly. At a logging expo, he and Jessica saw the Tajfun (pronounced like “typhoon”) RCA 400 Joy firewood processor on display. “It was such a small machine, we didn’t think much of it, because we were looking for a machine to replace the big one we were using at that time,” she said. “After watching the demonstration, Anson was intrigued, so we visited the dealer, and after trying it

out, we bought it.” One of the things they liked immediately was the single joystick operation, which controls all of the firewood processor functions. But on closer inspection, they also came to appreciate the safety features of the machine, which meets international standards. They bought it, and Jessica soon mastered the machine and was cranking out firewood by the cord.

“The 400 is my machine,” says Jessica. After two years running the processor weekends and evenings, she had enough confidence to quit her job and go into the firewood business full time. “I do it all from start to finish. I load the decks, cut and split the wood, and deliver it with a one-ton dump truck. Right now, I can do one cord at a time, but our next step is to get a truck that can hold two cords.” She says that now her time is divided between splitting and delivering firewood and running the office. “I average two to three cords a day, depending on how far I have to go to deliver firewood and how much office work I have,” she says.

Anson Baldwin’s tree service and logging business supplies plenty of material for Jessica to work with, but they also get wood from other operations. “Anson does the

logging, hauls sawlogs to local sawmills, and brings limbs and small and crooked logs to the firewood business,” she explained. “We’re producing between 400 and 600 cords per year.”

Jessica says that as much as she likes the 400 model, its 15-inch-diameter capacity was too small. “In the real world, you get a pile with bigger pieces, and we couldn’t put them through the 400. There is more wood available if we can take bigger logs. No matter where we get our wood, there’s always a few big ones.” When they learned that a larger model that could handle 19-inch-diameter logs (the Tajfun RCA 480 Joy) was available, they bought the first one to be imported into the U.S. “They brought it directly to our place for dealer training and demonstration,” recalled Jessica. After seeing it operate, they purchased it on the spot. “It never left our property,” she concluded. With the two firewood processors, each powered by a Kubota 5550 tractor, they are in a good position to expand the firewood end of their business.

Features

Tajfun firewood processors have several unique features. Their compact size makes it easy to underestimate the size and production capability. The machine gets its power from the power take off (PTO) of a farm tractor. According to Howard Boyden with OESCO, the dealer who sold the Tajfun processors to Anson and Jessica, the 480 Joy processor requires at least 35 horsepower to run,



Jessica Perkins controls the splitting cycle of the Joy 480. She says that the simple joystick control makes the machine very easy to learn. The Joy 480 meets international safety standards. For example, opening the cover stops all mechanical functions.

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but takes a larger tractor to pick it up and move it with the 3-point hitch. “Many people just buy an old farm tractor to power it,” he explained. The live deck feeds the logs to the chain infeed conveyor, which moves the logs into a tunnel where the cutting and splitting take place. The chain saw cutoff and splitting chamber are totally enclosed. Opening the access door automatically stops all moving parts until the door is again closed and latched.

The 480 Joy has a 24-inch bar that uses a 0.375-pitch chain. Unlike most splitters, the cutoff saw is mechanically powered by the PTO. To keep the wood flowing smoothly, a pair of flippers holds the firewood until the wood is cut, and then opens to drop it straight into the splitting chamber where 25 tons of force pushes the wood through a 4-way or 6-way wedge with a 4-second cycle time. Jessica puts large pieces aside to be re-split, but with a good market for furnace logs, very few go through the splitter a second time. Most of the wood gets cut to a 16-inch length and allowed to dry for a year before selling, but the conveyor dumps some directly into the dump truck for immediate delivery. She cuts custom sizes up to 19 inches long (the maximum for the Tajfun processors), some of which goes to restaurants that use wood-fired ovens.

Usability

All of this happens with user input from a single joystick. As for the learning curve, Jessica says that she was comfortable using the machine within the first hour of using it. In fact, she has so much confidence in the processor—and its safety features—that she lets her 9-year-old daughter run it. “After watching me for a few minutes, she took to it in about 5 minutes. She loves running the processor,” says Jessica. She recalled the following anecdote: “I was at a logging exposition after we bought the machine, and Howard Boyden was there. To demonstrate how easy it is to use, he pretended to pick me out at random, and yelled out, ‘Hey, young lady, would you like to give this a try?’ I played along, and said, ‘Sure, I’ll give it a try.’ Of course, I could use it right away without any coaching, and everyone was amazed that someone could just walk up to it and use it with no instruction. It was pretty funny, but Howard did come clean and tell the audience that I am an owner and use the processor on a regular basis. But seriously, it is easy to pick up with minimal instruction.”

The transition from the 400 Joy to the 480 Joy processor was smooth. Both have controls in the same place and operate much the same, with a few exceptions. Even though the 480 can handle bigger logs, it is actually a little slower than the 400, because its more powerful hydraulic ram has a longer cycle time. The second difference that Jessica noted was that the 480’s large physical size puts the door to the splitting chamber higher off the ground, and it isn’t quite as easy for her to reach in and straighten a log if it doesn’t fall straight into the splitting chamber, though she noted this is an infrequent occurrence and does not have a noticeable effect on the output. The 480 is also significantly heavier and needs a larger tractor to move it, though the power requirements are the same to run either processor. With 50 horsepower at the PTO and a lift capacity of 3,300 pounds, their Kubota tractors are more than adequate for their needs.

Jessica says that customer support for the Tajfun firewood processors has been great. The only issue has been with the wiring to the joystick, but it was quickly resolved. “Howard knows the machines, and has been great about answering any questions,” she says.

Looking toward the future, Jessica says she’d like to set up a kiln for drying the firewood, get a bigger delivery truck, and hire a second person to run the splitter while she runs the office. But she says she’ll still find time to run the splitter some. Who knows, maybe in a few years her daughter will be behind the wheel of a 2-ton truck delivering firewood! ■

Dave Boyt has a BS degree in Forest Management and an MS in Wood Technology. He manages a tree farm (2006 Missouri Tree Farm of the Year), and operates a band saw sawmill.



Tajfun 480 Specs

Maximum diameter	19-in.
Maximum firewood length	19-in.
Power	PTO tractor output— 35 hp minimum
Cutoff saw	24-in. .0375 pitch chain saw
Wedge options	4-, 6- and 8-way, interchangeable
Splitting force	25 tons
Splitter cycle time	4 seconds
Weight	3,173 pounds (with outfeed conveyor)
Outfeed conveyor	Standard
Options	Live deck, log loader, roller table, gas power unit, and sawdust extractor

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