

Tree and Vegetation Maintenance



Why is Tree Trimming Necessary?

Tree contact with transmission lines is a leading cause of electric power outages and a common cause of past regional blackouts. This is the reason the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) developed and enforced standards to ensure the reliability of the Bulk Power System, including the Reliability Standard that addresses vegetation management and tree trimming on rights-of-way.

What guides the clearance for tree trimming?

Electric service reliability and public safety require that clearance between trees and transmission lines in the right-of-way always be maintained.

- Electric Reliability Standard FAC-003-4 requires that trees and other vegetation growing in or adjacent to the power line right-of-way be trimmed to prevent power outages caused by tree contact with a transmission line.
- Trees and other vegetation are regularly pruned beyond the minimum clearance distance to account for the fact that they continuously grow and sway with the wind. Power lines can also sag due to high usage, heat, or snow/ice build-up. Therefore, the prudent right-of-way maintenance necessitates a greater clearance distance between power lines and trees than may occasionally appear to be necessary.
- Like all energy organizations, Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. (Central) practices tree trimming and vegetation management. Our practical approach balances the need to prevent outages with collaboration with landowners.

What are landowners' rights?

Landowner rights are usually formalized in a right-of-way agreement to the property, which will be recorded, describing the rights of the parties for building and maintaining electric lines.

How does the vegetation program work?

Just like in your own yard, Central uses a targeted approach to treating problem vegetation that has the potential to interfere with electrical equipment, while leaving other vegetation relatively unaffected.

Days or weeks after treatment, you may observe a "browning" effect, where the plant no longer sprouts green leaves and begins its process of decomposition. This is normal and means the treatment is working. The start and length of this process varies with each species of plant.

It is not uncommon to see an increase in low-growing vegetation after treatment. With the added space, sunlight and nutrients, low-growing plants and flowers can thrive – creating a healthy, balanced environment that won't interfere with your power quality.

Are there steps taken to prevent damage to privately owned vegetation?

Central crews do not apply treatments near noticeably occupied homes. We also maintain a 10-foot buffer from sensitive areas, such as manicured lawns, pastures, organic farms, bodies of water, public parks, etc.