

Tree-Trimming Practices



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OPPD

Omaha Public Power District



Promoting Tree Health and Electric Safety

Trees and good electric service are both important to our community. Unfortunately, the two aren't always compatible, and OPPD must trim trees for safety purposes, as required by law, and to avoid service interruptions.

OPPD trims tree limbs away from overhead power lines in order to achieve two critical objectives:

- Public safety
- Reliability of electrical service

Tree limbs are responsible for numerous downed power lines and outages every year. Obviously, a downed power line is a potential safety hazard – one that OPPD tries hard to prevent. And, with the abundant use of electronic technology at home and on the job, service reliability isn't a luxury today – it's a necessity.

If trimming is necessary on your property to maintain line clearance, your cooperation in the interest of safety and reliable electric service is appreciated, and will also help to control the high cost of tree trimming.

Important Numbers

OPPD's tree-trimming

Metro Omaha **536-4131**
Outside metro area **877-536-4131**

Diggers Hotline

Metro Omaha **344-3565**
Outside metro area **800-331-5666**

Tree Trimming

Q What method does OPPD use to trim trees?

A OPPD adheres to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300, Standard Practices for Trees, Shrubs and Other Woody Plant Maintenance. This standard, endorsed by the International Society of Arboriculture, the National Arbor Day Foundation and the National Arborist Association, requires tree-trimmers to cut branches back to the “parent limb.” This practice allows the pruning cuts to “heal” more rapidly, reducing the chances of insect and disease damage, and promotes a healthier regrowth of branches that are directed away from the power lines.

Pruning considerations include: species of tree, growth and regrowth rates, location of trees in proximity to power lines, voltage of power lines, type of power-line construction, length of pruning cycle, natural tree shape and branching pattern, general tree condition, appearance after pruning and tree-owner input.

Here are photos of the types of trimming that OPPD employs. The style used depends on how the tree is placed in relation to the power line and the type of tree that is being trimmed.



In V-cutting, branches are pruned back toward the center of the tree crown.



Notch-trimming prunes branches to create a “notch” in the upper tree crown so power lines can pass to the side and above the tree.



Side-trimming prunes back branches on the side of the tree.

OPPD uses the "natural-trimming" method. It is called natural trimming because branches are pruned back to a natural point of growth in the crown of the tree. Natural trimming is healthier than tree "topping," which is the indiscriminate cutting back of tree branches to reduce the size of the tree crown. Although topping generally leaves the tree with a more uniform or balanced appearance, the International Society of Arboriculture calls topping "perhaps the most harmful pruning practice known." According to the Society, topping stresses trees makes them more vulnerable to insect and disease infections and causes decay.

Q What qualifications do OPPD foresters and contract tree-trimming crews have?

A OPPD employs a highly trained staff of foresters, who have college degrees and experience in forestry or natural resources, and are certified arborists with both the

International Society of Arboriculture and the Nebraska Arborist Association. The forestry team is responsible for directing the work of contractor line-clearance crews.

It is essential that tree trimming be done properly to ensure safe and dependable electric service, and to provide for the welfare of the trees on your property. To assure that proper tree trimming and removal is performed, OPPD contracts with professional line-clearance tree-trimming firms. These firms are required to be licensed to work in OPPD's service area, and must adhere to all standards, guidelines and laws governing the performance of tree work. Each contractor employee receives ongoing training to achieve and maintain "line-clearance tree-trimmer" certification by the Occupational Safety and Health Association. Identification cards are issued to employees of the tree-trimming firms contracted by OPPD.

Q How does OPPD know when a tree needs to be trimmed or removed?

A The following priority is followed in determining when and where tree-trimming will be done:

- Reports of outages caused by trees
- Areas where trees have been damaged by storms
- During the regular tree-trimming cycle
- Based on periodic inspections by OPPD personnel
- Reports from customers indicating potential tree/power-line problems.

Q When will OPPD trim or remove trees?

A Trees that interfere with or have a potential for interfering with power lines, and trees that obstruct the route of new lines will be trimmed or removed. There are, however, two exceptions:

1. Trees that interfere with service wires (wires from OPPD poles to the customer's house or building) and yard-light wires will not normally be trimmed or removed. Arrangements can be made to have these wires temporarily removed to permit the property owner or a contractor to trim or remove the tree. If customers want their electric service or yard-light wires temporarily disconnected to trim or remove a tree, they should contact OPPD several days in advance. This service is not available on Sundays or holidays, and may be delayed due to emergency work.

2. OPPD will not trim trees near streetlights or yard-lights to improve illumination.

If OPPD requires that a tree be trimmed or removed, all branches and wood cut from the tree will be removed from the property. The property owner may keep any portion of the wood desired. However, OPPD will not cut wood to uniform length or stack the wood. Trees to be removed will be cut as close to ground level as possible, but OPPD does not remove stumps.

Fallen trees or limbs that have fallen from standing trees are the responsibility of the property owner. The property owner also is responsible for the disposal of all limbs and wood resulting from the trimming of storm-damaged trees during OPPD's service-restoration efforts.

Q Will OPPD notify the owner before doing tree work?

A OPPD respects the property of its customer-owners, and will notify the property owner of the need for tree work before trimming is done. However, in unusual or emergency situations, it may be necessary to trim trees without notification in order to restore service or eliminate safety hazards. Right-of-way provisions, easements, covenants and OPPD's service agreement with our customers, grant OPPD the authority to trim trees without property owner permission. However, every effort is made to communicate with the customer to alleviate concerns.

OPPD recommends the removal of trees that will require extensive trimming on a regular basis, but trees will not be removed without the property owner's permission.

Q Are wood and wood chips available to the public?

A Wood that is not wanted by property owners will be made available to the public with the following considerations:

- Persons who want wood on private property need to make arrangements with the property owner
- Wood will not be cut to uniform size or any smaller than necessary for normal handling
- Wood will not be loaded into private vehicles or trailers
- Wood will not be stacked or separated
- When it is cost-effective to do so, wood and wood chips may be placed on private or public property with approval of the property owner

Q

Can a private property owner or commercial tree trimmer obtain help in trimming or removing trees near electrical wires?

A

OPPD will assist property owners and/or their commercial contractors, at their request, with the trimming and removal of trees that are near OPPD electric wires. When a tree-trimming request is received, an OPPD representative inspects the site and explains to the property owner or contractor what OPPD can do to assist them. OPPD's assistance may include:

- The temporary rerouting, de-energizing or removing of electric wires that may be hazardous to workers. OPPD will coordinate with the property owner or contractor about the time that the work can be done.
- The trimming of the tree so that it can be safely removed or trimmed by the

property owner or contractor. All wood cut from the tree will be left on the property owner's premises. OPPD is not responsible for cutting wood to size or piling brush. The customer or contractor is responsible for removing brush that is blocking sidewalks or driveways.

For More Information

If you would like more information about OPPD's tree-trimming practices, please call 536-4131, or outside the metropolitan area, toll-free 1-877-536-4131 or visit OPPD's Web site at www.oppd.com.

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