



Vegetation Management & Easements



Keeping trees clear of electrical lines is important to your power supply and to the trees! Generally, Farmers Electric Cooperative requires 10 feet of clearance around lines to keep reliable power coming to you and your neighbors—and that means large trees near power lines have to be heavily trimmed, severely limiting their potential to grow and develop. Most cities even have ordinances that prohibit the planting of large trees near power lines or in a utility easement. However, low-growing trees will not reach electric lines and cause power outages.

Here are some tips on choosing, planting, and maintaining trees to maximize their appeal and value while minimizing the risk of interfering with power equipment:

- Evergreens can help save energy by serving as windbreaks, and should be planted on the west or north side of your house at least 50 feet away.
- Deciduous trees (trees that drop their leaves in the fall) should be planted on the south and/or west side of your house. They can provide cooling shade in the summer and allow warm sunlight through in the winter.
- Trees vary in their mature heights. Planting the right trees in the right place will enhance property value and prevent costly damage or maintenance to electrical lines and to your home.
- See more tips on planting the right tree in the right place at: arborday.org/trees/planting/

Tree Safety

- Remember that electric utility lines carry voltages that are many times greater than the standard household voltage. Both primary and secondary lines have the potential to kill or severely injure people who make contact with them, either directly or indirectly. This means that although you are not touching the power line, if something near you touches it, you could be electrocuted.
- Members of the public should never attempt to clear trees from around power lines.

General Restrictions on Rights-of-Way/Easements

- If a property owner alters the terrain or in any other way causes a need for Farmers Electric Cooperative facilities to be raised, lowered, protected, or relocated, the property owner will be required to reimburse Farmers Electric Cooperative for the related expense.
- If a new easement is required, the property owner will be required to grant the new easement at no cost to Farmers Electric Cooperative.
- Fences with access gates and landscaping may be installed on utility easements, except where such installations would prevent access to utility lines for operation and maintenance of utility equipment.
- Farmers Electric Cooperative prohibits the planting of trees or large bushes in easements because, upon maturity, they may require regular trimming to avoid contact with overhead electric lines or the root systems may damage underground electric cables. Other permanent structures or buildings are not allowed within utility easements.
- A minimum clearance is required around all underground vaults and above ground electrical equipment. A distance of ten feet must be kept clear at all times in front of all equipment service doors and at least three feet from the equipment pad or vault must be kept clear at all times.
- Gates must be provided for ready access to all Farmers Electric Cooperative facilities (e.g., meters, poles, etc.). Locks on the gate are prohibited unless Farmers places a lock as well.
- Trees should be planted far enough away from all vaults and above-ground equipment so that, at maturity, overhanging branches will not obstruct a crane setting or removing equipment. Responsibility for upkeep and maintenance of landscaping in a utility easement is borne by the property owner.
- Farmers Electric Cooperative may require individual customers to grant easements for installation of new electric lines within or across the property being served. The customer shall be responsible for provision of all easements and rights-of-way permits necessary for installation of electric facilities at no cost to Farmers Electric Cooperative.

Tree Trimming: Frequently Asked Questions

How much will they cut from my tree?

Typically, the amount and type of pruning that is necessary is based on:

- Tree growth rate and structure
- Wind sway
- Line sag
- Tree species
- Health or vigor of the tree
- Environmental factors
- Irrigation
- Proximity of the tree to the power lines and the line configuration
- Voltage (the higher the voltage, the greater the clearance required)

Which pruning guidelines does Farmers Electric Cooperative follow?

Farmers follows the American National Standard Institute (ANSI) A-300 Part 1: Tree, Shrub, and Other Woody Plant Maintenance - Standard Practices, Pruning. These guidelines, endorsed by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), promote natural target pruning and directional pruning methods, which minimize pruning stress to focus on tree health while obtaining needed clearance from conductors.

What is directional pruning?

Directional pruning removes branches growing toward the conductors while leaving those growing away. Directional pruning is the most appropriate way to prune trees for electric utility line clearance.

How will a tree look after it is directionally pruned?

Trees growing directly under conductors may appear U- or V-shaped. Trees growing alongside a conductor or power lines may appear L-shaped, or one side may be removed from side pruning. The tree may appear misshapen, especially if you are looking down the street. In general, trees growing close to electric utility lines or facilities will never have the potential to grow with a completely “natural” looking shape.

Why not put the utility lines underground?

Installing utility lines underground comes with a very high price tag, coupled with more difficult (and longer) repairs in the event of a power failure. Also, converting an overhead system to underground may do more damage to the root systems of existing trees.

While we attempt to preserve the aesthetic value of trees and vegetation in and around our facilities, during outage situations our primary concerns are reducing fire and electrocution hazards, and providing personal and public safety from falling branches and trees. Following these events, some trees may require additional pruning to meet industry standards.