Vegetation Management
Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why does AEP Ohio clear vegetation away from power lines?
A. AEP Ohio’s goal is to provide safe, dependable electric service to its customers. Line clearance activities in the company’s utility rights of way are a necessary part of AEP Ohio’s continual efforts to manage the growth of vegetation around its electrical facilities.

AEP Ohio’s priority is to clear trees, limbs and brush away from overhead lines and equipment to help prevent potential safety and reliability concerns.

Q. How does clearing trees away from power lines and other electrical equipment prevent power outages?
A. Tree limbs contacting power lines are one of the most common causes of power outages. One tree limb can knock out electric service to hundreds or even thousands of customers. Trees also can delay restoration of service that has been interrupted.

Q. What improvements to my service can I, as a customer, expect to see after trees are cleared from around power lines?
A. We anticipate the overall reliability performance of our system will improve. Past tree clearance has reduced the number of sustained outages as well as momentary power outages and has minimized damage caused by severe weather events.

Q. How often does AEP Ohio clear trees from its facilities?
A. AEP Ohio is conducting a four-year maintenance cycle to more effectively keep lines and equipment clear of vegetation. This means lines will be trimmed approximately every four years.

Q. Will communities see more work in their areas?
A. Yes. AEP Ohio’s efforts to clear lines will be more aggressive and complete than in the past. Some customers and communities will see some significant differences than seen in the past.

Q. Who will do this work?
A. AEP Ohio contracts primarily with Asplundh Tree Expert Company Inc., a licensed international tree care organization, to clear vegetation from around distribution facilities. Nelson Tree Service Inc., a licensed tree-care company used primarily by AEP’s transmission organization, also works in some areas.

Q. What is the contractors weekly work schedule?
A. AEP Ohio’s tree contractors typically observe a 40-hour work week.

Q. What guidelines does AEP Ohio follow when clearing limbs and trees away from electrical equipment?
A. AEP Ohio’s vegetation management program uses clearance practices that protect tree health and removes trees, limbs and brush that can be potential safety hazards or affect service reliability.

Tree clearance is directed by AEP Ohio's team of professional foresters, following standards set by the International Society of Arboriculture, American National Standards Institute and the National Arborist Association.
Q. How does AEP Ohio decide where to clear trees?
A. AEP Ohio prioritizes areas based on frequency of tree-related outages and their effect on customers.

Q. How much clearing does AEP Ohio plan?
A. Clearing may be done by circuit or by specific zone. For circuit clearing, crews will begin work at one end of the circuit and continue to the other end of the circuit.

Some areas will involve problem or potential problem zones, such as trees along lines near substations or areas where a tree or groups of trees are contacting or soon will contact lines and equipment.

Q. If my area was cleared recently, will it be cleared again?
A. If your entire circuit was not cleared at that time, crews may return to clear the rest of the circuit if it is deemed necessary. AEP Ohio’s four-year vegetation management cycle means lines are cleared approximately every four years.

Q. Will the work involve just tree trimming or will trees also be removed?
A. The objective is to remove obstructions from within the rights of way to provide a minimum of 10 feet of clearance on both sides of the lines.

Potentially hazardous trees growing directly under or near power lines may be removed rather than trimmed. An AEP Ohio forester can help property owners select the proper tree for replanting.

Q. How does AEP Ohio decide how much to trim on my trees?
A. Each tree is different. AEP Ohio tree contractors use tree pruning and removal guidelines developed by the American National Standards Institute and the International Society of Arboriculture for each species. These guidelines are followed to promote the health and continual growth of trees.

Q. Does AEP Ohio use aerial saws or other mechanical tools as part of its vegetation management practices?
A. More mechanical tools, such as Jaraffs, mowers and aerial saws, will be used in difficult to access areas as deemed appropriate. Aerial saws generally are used in less populated rural areas.

The following page shows some of the equipment AEP Ohio uses to help manage vegetation growth in its utility line easements.
Examples of equipment AEP Ohio uses to manage vegetation growth.

Jaraff

Aerial saw from helicopter.

Mower attached to front of tracked vehicle.

Another example of a mower.
Q. Does AEP Ohio use tree growth regulators or herbicides as part of its vegetation management practices?
AEP Ohio uses tree growth inhibiter throughout its service territory on some fast-growing tree species located under power lines to slow their growth after they are trimmed. Examples of fast-growing tree species include silver maple, elm, oak and ash. AEP Ohio companies have used tree growth inhibitor products for the past 15 years.

The company uses only herbicides registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other state and federal agencies and adheres to the application rates specified on the product label. For added safety, AEP Ohio employs only licensed, experienced contractors to do this work.

Q. Does AEP Ohio remove debris generated by its tree clearance activities?
A. During regular maintenance, branches and limbs within maintained and landscaped areas are removed for disposal. Wood is left for the property owner’s use. In non-maintained areas, wood, branches and limbs are left to decompose naturally.

During emergency power restoration, such as storms, crews clear trees from electrical facilities and move on to the next location. AEP Ohio does not return to remove the cut trees or debris following storms. Property owners are responsible for tree and brush removal.

Q. AEP Ohio says it works to protect the environment. How does AEP Ohio equate tree clearance with being environmentally friendly?
A. AEP Ohio understands the importance of trees to the environment. The company is committed to balancing the importance of trees to the environment with the equally important need to provide reliable electricity to its customers. AEP Ohio wants to work with property owners to avoid conflicts about trees and power lines.

Q. How will I know when my trees are going to be trimmed?
A. Prior to utility line clearance (tree trimming), a work planner goes door-to-door in the area to be worked to notify residents and discuss details of the work to be done with the property owner. If the property owner is not there or no one is home, the planner leaves a card with details and a number to call with questions.

AEP Ohio also may contact affected customers through a brief recorded telephone message to remind them work is about to begin in their areas.

Q. How do I know which trees will be trimmed?
A. Work planners determine which trees are cause for concern and will notify residents of the work that needs to be done.

Q. Does AEP Ohio make communities aware of this work before it begins?
A. AEP Ohio works to avoid conflicts that can occur regarding tree clearance activities. The company’s community affairs specialists meet with their local community leaders to answer questions and ease concerns about planned work.
Q. Can I trim my own trees?
A. Property owners never should attempt to trim or remove tree limbs near or adjacent to power lines. Only trained and licensed professionals should trim trees around power lines. Serious injury or death can occur when untrained individuals attempt to do this work.

Please report tree safety or reliability concerns to AEP Ohio at 1-800-672-2231 or online at AEPOhio.com.

Q. How do I know which trees will be trimmed?
A. Work planners determine which trees are cause for concern and will notify residents of the work that needs to be done.

Q. What happens if a tree is not within the utility easement, but its branches are over-hanging the easement?
A. The primary action will be to side trim the trees; however, trees also may be selected for removal with property owners’ permission.

Q. What if I don’t want my trees trimmed; is there anything I can do to stop this?
A. AEP Ohio has an obligation to manage the growth of vegetation around its facilities to ensure safe, reliable operation of its electrical facilities and to provide reliable power to its customers. The company is committed to balancing the importance of trees with the equally important need to provide reliable electricity to its customers.

Keep in mind that although it is important to keep the natural beauty of a tree, that tree’s contact with power lines could cause momentary outages and/or lengthy loss of service, not only for you but for many residents and businesses in your neighborhood.

AEP Ohio wants to work with property owners to avoid conflicts about trees and power lines. AEP Ohio foresters can advise property owners about the proper trees to plant in landscaped areas near power lines.