PROPER TREE CARE PROTECTS PROPERTY AND PREVENTS OUTAGES

Seven to 10 percent of electric outages are caused by the failure of trees or their branches due to high winds. Most of those outages occur on private property some distance away from electric lines.

Proper tree care by the property owner can help reduce the risk of tree failures, protect property and prevent electric outages.

SAFETY AND PROFESSIONALISM

MidAmerican Energy Company’s vegetation management program is founded on the industry’s best safety and pruning practices. This includes routine maintenance utilizing natural, scientific-based pruning to minimize negative impacts to the tree’s health, tree removal, tree replacement programs and the proper use of herbicides. MidAmerican Energy employs a professional staff of ISA Certified Arborists (International Society of Arboriculture) to manage our line clearance program. MidAmerican Energy has achieved the Tree Line USA designation since 2001—an annual award from the National Arbor Day Foundation that recognizes utilities for utilizing practices that protect America’s urban forests.

TOLL-FREE MIDAMERICAN ENERGY PHONE NUMBERS

Electric outages/wires down: 800-799-4443
Gas leaks: 800-595-5325
Customer Service: 888-427-5632

Before planting, call to have underground utilities located:

Iowa: 800-292-8989
Illinois: 800-892-0123
South Dakota: 800-781-7474
Nebraska: 800-331-5666

CAN TREES BE PLANTED UNDER ELECTRIC LINES?

High voltage transmission line easements normally do not allow planting of trees under or near the wires. Any tree that matures at 20 feet in height or less in its natural form can be planted under power lines that directly serve residential and business customers. Some choices include:

FLOWERING DOGWOOD (CORNUS FLORIDA)
Spreading, flattened shape; white flowers; red fruit. Red-panicle dogwood (C. racemosa) is a good native substitute, with clusters of pale, yellow flowers and white fruit that birds, particularly pheasants, enjoy.

REDBUD (CERCIS CANADENSIS)
Vaseshaped; purple flowers in spring; heartshaped leaves have a yellow fall color.

SNOWDRIFT CRABAPPLE (MALUS ‘SNOWDRIFT’)
Upright growing; red buds open to white flowers; small fruits; disease resistant.

ALLEGHENY SERVICEBERRY (AMELANCHIER LAVEIS)
Multistemmed; white flowers; sweet, black fruit enjoyed by many birds and animals. Other species of serviceberry in shrub form are more commonly available locally.

WASHINGTON HAWTHORN (CRATAEGUS PHAENOPIRYM)
Single or multistemmed; single white flowers; orangered berries; orange and red fall colors. Note: These are susceptible to cedarapple rust; do not plant if eastern redcedar (Juniperus virginiana) is nearby.

NEWPORT PLUM (PRUNUS CERASIFERA ‘NEWPORT’)
Hardy tree form; red-purple foliage all summer; pink flowers in May.

DWARF FRUIT TREES
Apple, apricot, cherry, peach, pear and plum. Many varieties. Take care to control root suckers, as the root stock may be from a taller species.

WHAT IS THE PRACTICE ON REMOVAL OF DEBRIS FROM TREE WORK?

Crews remove tree debris created during regular maintenance pruning. Mulch and wood is left, if requested. For regular maintenance and tree removal, brush is chipped, wood is cut to manageable lengths for your use or disposal, and the stump is cut as close to the ground as possible and treated to prevent regrowth. If dead or dying trees are removed, the tree is put on the ground, and all debris is left. When you or your tree service requests assistance, we are obligated to make the situation electrically safe, leaving all debris. When clearing storm-damaged limbs from electric lines, we make the situation electrically safe, leaving all debris. These guidelines apply to work performed by us at no charge to you.
WHY ARE TREES PRUNED MORE THAN OTHERS?
The amount of pruning needed depends on two things – the type of electric lines and the type of tree. Transmission and distribution lines need the most clearance. Tree contacts with these lines are serious safety hazards and can cause major electric service outages. Service lines can withstand minor contact with trees; however, they must have a clear path to a home. Factors associated with the type of tree that determine the amount of pruning needed include a tree’s movement in windy conditions and a branch structure that allows it to be climbed. Different trees have different branching patterns and growth rates. Fast-growing trees like silver maples and Siberian elms can have weak, poorly connected limbs that split during wind and ice storms. Slow-growing trees and those with strong branch connections may not need to be pruned as much.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF TREE PRUNING IS PLANNED FOR MY AREA?
Mailings typically are sent to customers approximately three weeks in advance of routine maintenance and trimming to be performed in their area. Customers also may receive an automated message of an upcoming work date or an e-mail with a work date. This procedure does not apply to emergency trimming performed in an effort to restore service after a storm.

ARE UTILITY REPRESENTATIVES OR THEIR TREE TRIMMERS ALLOWED TO ENTER MY PROPERTY WITHOUT MY PERMISSION?
Utility representatives or contractors may enter a property to trim branches touching or close to electric lines. Utility companies have this right throughout their service areas. An easement essentially is permission for the utility to maintain its power lines on a customer’s property. Easements are filed with the County Recorder’s office, and copies typically are kept on file at the utility. Proper cut is made just outside of the branch collar.

WHAT TREES SHOULD BE AVOIDED WHEN PLANTING NEAR ELECTRIC LINES?
Trees that are easy to climb and fast-growing trees with weak branch connections should not be planted near electric lines. Pines, especially white pine, are among the easiest trees to climb. Siberian elm, weeping willow and silver maple tend to have tight crotches that split easily under a heavy water load or during high winds.

THERE ARE NO OVERHEAD POWER LINES IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD. DO I STILL NEED TO THINK ABOUT WHERE TO PLANT A TREE?
Yes. If there are no overhead power lines in your neighborhood, you may have a green metal utility box mounted on a small concrete or fiberglass pad in your yard. Crews need access to the inside of the box in order to repair and maintain underground electric facilities. Don’t plant shrubs or trees, put in a rock garden or build a fence within 10 feet of the access door or within three feet of the remaining sides. Obstructions will cause delays when restoring electric service. Contact MidAmerican Energy before planting or building near electrical boxes.

WHAT IS NATURAL PRUNING?
Natural pruning is the removal of a limb at the point where it grows from either another limb or the tree’s trunk. A cut made at this point, called a node, will seal naturally and help prevent decay. It is important to the health of the tree that the final pruning cut is made at a node, which may sometimes be far away from electric lines, rather than leaving a stubbed-off limb. Stubbed-off limbs do not seal, which allows decay. These limbs either die back or rapidly grow watersprouts. Watersprouts can increase tree height and easily break during wind and ice storms. Natural pruning methods produce healthier trees that require less frequent pruning.

WHY DO YOU PRUNE ONLY ONE SIDE OF SOME TREES? DOESN’T THAT THROW THEM OFF BALANCE?
Trees are balanced and anchored by extensive root systems that spread out just below the soil’s surface. We prune only what is necessary for electric safety and reliability. Removing healthy limbs from a tree’s opposite side to balance looks may compromise the tree’s health and make them hazardous.

HOW MUCH WILL THIS COST ME?
Cost is covered in electric rates paid. No additional charges apply.

CAN I PRUNE TREES NEAR ELECTRIC LINES MYSELF OR HIRE A TREE SERVICE TO DO IT?
To work safely near electric conductors, you or your tree service must be line clearance-certified. Specialized equipment, training and testing are required for certification. If you, your equipment or the branches you touch come in contact with an energized conductor, you can be seriously injured. If you choose to work on your own trees, LOOK UP BEFORE YOU PRUNE and check for nearby electric conductors.

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WHY ARE TREES NEAR ELECTRICAL LINES PRUNED OR REMOVED?
Trees near electric lines must be pruned or removed to alleviate safety hazards and improve service reliability. Falling trees or debris from trees cause outages and create dangerous situations when they knock down electric lines. Trees near electric lines also pose a danger to anyone who might climb them. Tall-growing trees should be planted at least 20 feet away from electric lines.

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