

Q. Why does OG&E clear vegetation away from power lines?

A. Trees that grow into power lines can cause problems in multiple ways:

Outages— Tree limbs contacting power lines are one of the most common causes of power outages. Trees can affect service reliability at the precise location where a tree may contact a line, at other locations on that line, or at other locations on the electric grid. Trees or limbs can fall across wires causing power failures. High growing bushes, shrubs, vines and trees may cause electrical blinks and flickers. If you have concerns about trees or vines growing near power lines, contact us. To be safe, never attempt to prune a tree near our wires yourself.

Safety—Trees and tree limbs can knock down power lines, causing a safety hazard for our customers. In addition, it's possible to be shocked by simply touching a tree in contact with high voltage wires. Power lines are just as dangerous if touched by someone climbing in a tree as they would be if touched by someone standing on the ground. Trees and limbs also compromise the safety of our employees, obstructing visibility and access

Q. My trees haven't caused any power outages. Why are you cutting or pruning them?

A. To maintain the millions of trees throughout our service territory, we must clear trees and limbs from the lines on a regular schedule. We believe that a four-year cycle provides a good balance, allowing us to provide you with safe, dependable electrical service while keeping electric rates low. To accomplish this, we contract with hundreds of professional line clearance arborists who work year-round. We are dedicated to provide safe, reliable electric service as cost-effectively as possible.

Q. How far do you trim the trees from the lines?

A. In the case of most trees, we prune between 10' and 14' from the wires. It is possible some trees may be pruned further if species or conditions warrant. Trees with trunks close to the power lines require much heavier pruning than trees located further from the line. When pruning operations are performed, our trimming experts make every attempt to prune sufficient clearance so that the tree will remain safe until we return on our next routine maintenance, approximately every four years. Trees directly under the wires or close to poles are likely to be removed if they are a large growing species. All work is done in accordance with ISA (International Society of Arborists) standards and accepted industry practices.

Q. How often does OG&E clear trees and limbs from its lines?

A. OG&E clears lines of limbs and trees on a four-year maintenance cycle. A four year-cycle has been determined to be the best compromise between providing safe, reliable power and managing vegetation costs. Trees may need to be pruned more often in rare situations where growing conditions or other variables make getting four years of clearance impractical.

Q. How much will this cost me?

A. Line clearance is a normal maintenance procedure. There is no direct charge to the customer. Keep in mind, however, all customers are essentially paying for the maintenance and upkeep of the lines, poles and other equipment that deliver power to their homes and businesses. For this reason, it is essential that new trees be planted away from power lines to prevent the need for trimming, help keep rates low, and ensure safe, reliable power.

Q. Can I trim my own trees?

A. Pruning trees around power lines should only be completed by trained professionals. Serious injuries and even fatalities have occurred when untrained individuals attempt to clear trees near power lines. Please contact us for an evaluation of the trees and vegetation around power lines prior to trimming them yourself or hiring a private arborist. State and federal safety regulations require any person working within 10 feet of a high-voltage electrical line to have proper training and certification.

Q. Can I hire my own arborist to prune the trees from the lines?

A. Line Clearance work is different from other forms of tree care in that the insurance and training requirements are much different. Any arborist that works on a tree within 10 feet of power lines is technically working “on the electric system” and must have permission from the system operator. For this reason, OG&E only allows approved Line Clearance contractors to work near their power lines for the safety of the arborist and the public.

If you have a dead tree, or are planning to have work done on a tree closer than 10 feet to the power lines, please contact OG&E for a safety inspection. OG&E is committed to safety and will make the tree “safe” for removal.

Q. Where can I get more information about the proper care and placement of trees?

A. The right tree planted in the right place can provide not only beauty but energy savings for your home. Consider cooling shade from deciduous trees on the south and west side of the home, and shelter from cold winter winds by evergreens on the north and northwest side of your home. Follow this link to a guide published by the Arbor Day Foundation (www.arborday.org/trees/righttreeandplace) or visit the website by the International Society of Arboriculture (www.treesaregood.com).

Always look up! Before planting and observe the following guidelines:

- Never plant trees or shrubs directly under power lines or within 6 feet of poles or pedestals
- Small trees and shrubs that will grow to 15' should be planted at least 5' from power lines
- Medium trees that will grow to 40' should be planted at least 20' from power lines
- Large trees should be planted a minimum of 50' from power lines.

A good rule of thumb is to check the tag at the nursery. The maximum height of the tree should be approximately how far the tree should be from the power lines.

Care also should be taken to plant trees at least six feet to the side of underground facilities (green electrical boxes). Underground utility cables and equipment need to be accessible for maintenance and repair. To find out where underground facilities are located before you plant, dial 811 on your mobile phone for Oklahoma or Arkansas Locates.

Q. Do you trim trees from the wire that runs from the pole to my house?

A. Maintaining clearance around the service drop (the lines that run from the pole to a home) is the property owner's responsibility. Although the voltage through a service drop is much lower than that of pole-to-pole power lines, we recommend that you hire a professional tree service to do this trimming. A professional tree service does not need line clearance certification to prune near your service drop.

Q. Why don't you put all the power lines underground?

A. Some lines cannot be feasibly placed underground. We place our lines underground in new residential developments but there are many obstacles to placing lines underground in established neighborhoods. Existing trees and their root systems would be impacted, undermining the health and stability of those trees. Considerable expense, time and disruption would be involved in trenching through existing roads and landscaping. Most homes in neighborhoods with overhead lines would also require major upgrades to accept underground service. The cost of such a major overhaul to the utility infrastructure would be significant and

would be passed, in part, to our customers (you) in the form of higher electric rates and directly as all individual homes would likely need service upgrades which would be the responsibility of the homeowner. Other utilities, such as phone and cable, also may be using the same poles as the power lines, so removal of the power lines may still leave other overhead lines.

Q. Is OG&E responsible for clean-up after pruning trees?

A. The majority of our pruning and cutting occurs during routine line maintenance cycles. Our policy is to chip and haul small limbs and brush that are pruned or removed during the course of normal maintenance work. Any wood larger than 4 inches in diameter may be cut into manageable lengths (firewood) and stacked on site for your use. When an "Act of God" (such as lightning, high winds, tornadoes, etc.) cause trees or other vegetation to fall across power lines and create power outages, we cut the trees and brush so poles and lines can be replaced and re-energized. Disposal of any wood, limbs or debris resulting from this type of emergency operation is the property owner's responsibility

Q. Why don't you paint or repair cuts made from pruning?

A. Painting cuts has been found to be ineffective, and in some cases detrimental for preventing disease and reducing tree-related stress from line clearance pruning.

Q. What if my tree is away from the lines, but its branches grow out above the wires?

A. The primary action will be to prune the branches away from the line, removing all overhanging branches. Trees also may be selected for removal in situations where certain hazards exist.

Q. What if I don't want my trees trimmed?

A. OG&E is committed to balancing the importance of trees with the equally important need to provide reliable electricity to all customers. Keep in mind that although it is desirable to keep the natural beauty of a tree, tree contact with power lines is unsafe and also could cause momentary outages and/or lengthy loss of service, not only for you but for many residents and businesses in your neighborhood.

When OG&E identifies tree pruning or pole clearing work to be done on your property, reasonable efforts will be made to notify you. While it is our intention to work with all customers to address their concerns, permission may not be required. OG&E is required to maintain its facilities.

Q. Does OG&E use herbicides?

A. OG&E uses selective 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, we employ licensed, experienced contractors to do this work. The products used have the same active ingredient as products available to the homeowner at garden centers, except these products are labeled specifically for rights-of-way. In general, the products we use have been used by farmers, homeowners and utilities for over 30 years and have demonstrated exceptional environmental and economic benefits.