

## **Trees and Your Electric Service**

Trees are an integral part of our life and inevitably, the conflicts between trees and overhead electric lines that develop must be addressed to assure your safety and service reliability. Trees can help you save energy when properly located, but are also a leading cause of electric service interruptions by contacting and damaging our overhead electric facilities.

The Village of Westfield Electric Department shares your concern and appreciation for trees. We recognize their value to you and your community. Diseased or damaged trees, those with structural defects, poor performing species and those growing in the wrong place frequently cause power outages when they contact our overhead electric lines. Our vegetation management program addresses trees along selected distribution feeder circuits typically on a five to seven year cycle.

In order to make sure that we are doing the best we can to care for our trees, we have hired a consultant to help us institute a tree management program. This program will help guide our decision making for tree removals, tree trimming, as well as tree planting. This professional guidance will allow us to take all necessary factors into consideration when deciding which trees to remove, trim, where to re-plant and what species will thrive in that area without conflicting with utilities. The Village has hired Bruce E. Robinson, Inc., Forestry Consultants of Jamestown, NY to develop this program.

### **Utility Pruning**

The technique of “directional pruning” is most commonly used to attempt to naturally direct trees growth away from wires. This science based pruning practice was developed in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service and is endorsed by the International Society of Arboriculture, the National Arbor Day Foundation and other tree care professionals around the world.

Our specifications are to maintain at least 10 feet of clearances from the primary lines next to, above and below the primary conductors in residential, urban and maintained areas, while secondary electric lines require at least 18 inches of clearance on all sides. In order to properly conform to industry ANSI A300 pruning standards, it may be necessary to cut limbs beyond the distance specified to the correct points of limb attachment with the crown of the tree. Trees may initially look different following directional pruning, but this line clearance pruning practice allows trees to remain healthy. Additionally, in rural and unmaintained urban areas under or immediately adjacent to our lines, we will cut small, volunteer or intrusive trees and tall growing brush to prevent future vegetation encroachment. Damaged, poorly structured trees or weak tree species may require additional pruning or even removal.

### **The Benefits of Directional Pruning**

Directional pruning considers the natural structure of the tree to reduce the number of cuts required. While the size of the cuts in the work area may seem larger than was common in the past, fewer cuts mean better wound isolation and ‘healing’ for the tree.

The guiding principle of directional pruning is the “90-3-90” rule. Typically, 90 percent of the interfering branches can be removed by making three larger cuts within the tree crown 90 percent of the time. We work with the natural form of the individual tree as to where best to make our cuts, rather than simply shortening branches. ‘Round-overs’ of the tree crown are no longer acceptable or practiced.

### **Proper Cuts**

Crews will use the ‘collar cutting’ method to remove limbs. Properly placed cuts facilitate more rapid wound closure as the tree is better able to isolate the pruning cut. Research has found wound dressings to be ineffective and they are no longer applied.

### **Service Lines to Your Home or Business**

If you have a tree-line concern or question, please notify our Electric Department at (716) 326-2145. Upon notice, we will send a qualified representative to investigate safety concerns caused by trees near our primary lines and report on our assessment at the time of inspection.

### **Clean Up and Wood Disposal**

Crews will chip the branches they remove from trees in your yard as part of our cycle pruning program and rake the work area to pick up smaller twigs/debris and disperse sawdust. Pieces of wood that cannot be chipped will be cut into manageable lengths and left near the base of the tree. In off-road and “unmanaged” areas, wood and brush will be left ‘windrowed’ along the edge of the right-of-way to naturally decompose and provide shelter benefits for wildlife. Paths, drainage ditches and stream channels within the work area will be kept clear.

### **Tree Removals Near Primary Lines**

In an effort to improve and maintain service reliability, we periodically inspect critical portions of our primary lines supplying your neighborhood to target ‘at risk’ trees that have a high probability of failure. These “hazard trees” that are considered for removal or additional pruning are typically beyond the edges of the areas we normally maintain. Not all trees require immediate attention, nor can all trees realistically be removed. We focus our efforts on the tree species and/or defects most likely to cause an outage in the most sensitive, critical portions of the distribution circuit.

### **Who Does the Pruning?**

Either employees of the Village of Westfield and/or approved utility tree contractors will be used to complete the work, conforming to the same nationally recognized industry ANSI-A300 pruning standards, safety practices and quality.

Your Service reliability is not our only concern. Our vegetation management program strives to provide as much clearance as possible between trees and energized overhead lines for safety reasons, too. Open, visible lines help to protect our workers, customers and private contractors working near these lines by avoiding accidental contact. You can further safeguard yourself and your family by:

- Allowing our tree crew to complete their work to meet our clearance specifications.
- Never operating tools or equipment within 10 feet of overhead lines.
- Never allowing children to climb trees near overhead lines.
- Never building a tree house in trees that are under or near power lines.
- Always being sure to “look up before you go up” and always call “Dig Safely New York” at 1-800-962-7962 before you plant a tree or dig on your property.
- Not planting large-growing trees under or near overhead lines...and please don’t plant trees or shrubs near underground electric distribution equipment boxes on your property.