

# UTILI-FACTS

## All About Trees and Power Lines

Trees provide beauty, shade, and habitat for wildlife. They help conserve soil and water and act as wind, noise, and visual



buffers. A community's trees are an asset and must be managed to maintain their health and prevent problems. Reliable electric service is also an integral part of our lives. Electric utilities strive to provide safe and reliable electric service. To achieve these goals, they must manage trees near power lines.



**Why is it necessary for the wires company to manage trees near power lines?**

First and foremost is public safety. Every year in Texas, people are injured or even killed when they climb or prune trees near power lines. High-voltage lines are not insulated, and direct contact usually results in death by electrocution.



A tree contacting a power line can also become energized, injuring someone touching the tree. Children should never climb or play in trees near power lines. Trees contacting power lines can also start fires, endangering lives and property.

Many trees are located too close to power lines. Power outages can occur when trees grow into or fall on power lines. Service interruptions caused by trees are more than an inconvenience; they can endanger lives through the failure of life support systems, fire alarms, and traffic signals. Power outages can also be very costly, especially to commercial and industrial customers.

**How does the wires company manage trees near power lines?**

The wires company routinely requires access to inspect trees near its lines and schedules periodic maintenance. The wires company prunes trees that interfere with power lines and may even need to completely remove a tree because of its condition. When pruning trees, the wires company determines the

required distance based on the voltage of the power line and the type of tree.

Some trees need to be pruned more than others to prevent problems. According to the American National Standards Institute A300 Pruning Standards, most wires companies hire professionals to prune trees.

**Can I prune my own trees?**

**NO!** By Texas law (Health & Safety Code, Chapter 752), only professionals who are authorized by the wires companies are allowed to prune or remove trees closer than 6 feet to high voltage power lines. These professionals have been properly trained and equipped to do so. Serious injury and even death can occur when untrained persons or homeowners attempt to prune trees closer than 6 feet to high voltage power lines. Call your wires company for assistance.

**What trees can be planted near power lines?**

Texas has a wide variety of low-growing trees that can be planted near power lines. As a rule, trees planted near power lines should have a mature height of less than 25 feet. Taller growing trees must be planted further away to prevent future problems. Homeowners should evaluate their trees near power lines and help ensure the trees are maintained to acceptable height. Most wires companies have tree planting booklets available to their customers that give advice on types of trees to plant. Remember, before you plant a tree, look up for power lines and call the "Call Before You Dig" toll-free line at 1-800-344-8377 to locate any buried lines.

### QUESTIONS:

Call: 1-888-782-8477, in Austin 512-936-7120  
(TTY 512-936-7136) (FAX 512-936-7003)

Write: PUC - Customer Protection Division  
P.O. Box 13326, Austin, TX 78711-3326

Online: <http://www.puc.texas.gov/consumer/complaint/Complaint.aspx>

