

***Policy***  
**PEOPLE'S ENERGY COOPERATIVE**

NUMBER: 206

SUBJECT: Right-of-way Vegetation Management

OBJECTIVE: To state the policy regarding vegetation management.

**POLICY:**

Maintaining adequate vegetation clearance from power lines and electric utility equipment is vital to the safe and reliable operation of the electric distribution and transmission system. It is the intent of the Cooperative to maintain proper tree clearance near overhead distribution and transmission lines for safety reasons, to minimize interruptions of electric service, and to provide access for line operations. The Cooperative will provide cost-effective vegetation management services on a scheduled maintenance cycle that ensures vegetation clearance from power lines and equipment is consistent with Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and Cooperative specifications.

The Cooperative requires that the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 Tree Care Operations standard practices relating to quality tree care, pruning, and integrated vegetation management be followed to the extent possible when planned maintenance is being performed in the vicinity of electric lines and equipment. Employees and contractors shall also adhere to (ANSI) Z133.1 Safety Standards.

**I. PLANTING OR MOVING OF TREES**

- A. Members should consider the mature canopy size of trees planted on their property. No tree shall be planted that will interfere with distribution or transmission lines when fully grown. Trees that will grow taller than fifteen (15) feet shall be planted at least twenty (20) feet away from pole center for single phase distribution lines and thirty (30) feet away from pole center for multiphase distribution lines. If a member's tree is in violation of the required distance, the member will receive a Tree Transplanting Notice- Appendix A, from the Cooperative informing them of the violation allowing them to address the issue timely.
- B. Trees will not be planted within forty (40) feet of pole center for transmission lines. Trees planted closer than this distance may be removed by the Cooperative without compensation to the landowner.
- C. Members and contractors should contact Gopher State One Call to locate underground utilities to avoid personal harm and damage to the lines and interruption of electric service when planting or moving trees. Members and contractors will be responsible for paying repair costs for lines that are damaged due to digging.

- D. Members shall not plant trees within ten (10) feet of underground cable. Necessary repair of underground lines could cause damage to trees planted near the cable. When planting around pad mount transformers or junction boxes, all vegetation shall be planted at least three (3) feet away from all sides and ten (10) feet away from the access panel.
- E. Trees less than 10 feet in height growing near the overhead distribution or transmission line may be moved or cut down by the member to reduce potential safety and service hazards. A member shall not risk his/her safety by cutting or moving trees taller than ten (10) feet located near power lines.

## II. TREE REMOVAL AND PRUNING

- A. The Cooperative is responsible for maintaining tree clearance only on secondary lines owned by the Cooperative. Responsibility for tree clearance on member owned lines belongs to the member. When the line belongs to the member, the hiring of a professional tree service is recommended to ensure member safety and prevent damage to electric lines. Refer to the diagrams shown in the brochure for line extension and service to determine secondary ownership.
- B. Trees that endanger Cooperative owned secondary lines (that portion of the line located beyond the transformer) may be cut down or pruned by the Cooperative to eliminate any immediate hazard. Covered secondary lines will not receive the same level of priority as uncovered lines.

As an alternative to performing member requested tree work near a secondary line, the Cooperative may offer to drop the line from the pole to the meter to allow the member to safely complete the work. This service should be scheduled during normal work hours. If disconnection or reconnection of service is requested outside of normal work hours, the member will be required to pay the standard overtime charge. Refer to Management Operating Guide 3D1, Service Fees for a summary of charges for disconnection and reconnection of service and Policy 302, Disconnection and Reconnection of Service.

- C. The Cooperative will provide vegetation maintenance along primary lines (those between the substation and the service transformer) and cooperative owned transmission lines. The appropriate vegetation management practices will be utilized at the discretion of the Cooperative's vegetation management staff to achieve the required line clearances until the next maintenance cycle.

Trees and brush growing within the right-of-way corridor outside of the home landscape will be removed by the Cooperative. Right-of-way

corridors will be managed to twenty (20) feet for single phase distribution, thirty (30) feet for multiphase distribution and forty (40) feet for transmission lines to either side of pole center.

Trees outside the right-of-way corridor, which are dead, dying, structurally defective or otherwise pose a danger of falling on the lines ("hazard trees"), will also be removed.

Landscape trees are trees located within an established lawn area or are ornamental specimens growing within the home landscape. Generally, the main trunk of landscape trees should be ten (10) feet or more from the vertical plane of the wires for distribution lines. Landscape trees will be pruned to provide clearance until the next scheduled maintenance cycle. The pruning distance will depend upon the species, cycle length and location of the tree. Landscape trees requiring repetitive pruning or those which are disfigured while achieving necessary clearance may be selected for removal with the property owner's consent.

To protect the public from electric injury, a minimum safety clearance from uninsulated conductors shall be obtained on all trees, regardless of location. A Safety Clearance Action Threshold has been established and is outlined in Appendix B. Safety clearance will be obtained with or without the property owner's consent.

Trees and brush growing in the right-of-way corridor will be cleared to forty (40) feet either side of pole center for transmission lines. If there are mature trees growing within the landscape right-of-way corridor, they may be trimmed, at the Cooperative's discretion, to prevent possible contact between the trees and conductors in the event of falling trees or line blowout created by wind.

- D. Property owners who request a variance from the specified tree clearances or maintenance policies must complete a Request for Reduced Clearance Variance agreement. Upon approval, the property owner may be offered an alternative such as reducing the clearances using other methods, pruning rather than removing, or rerouting the line. Alternatives that involve additional expense to the Cooperative will be paid for by the property owner in advance of any work being performed.
- E. During maintenance cycle work, small branches may be mulched or windrowed. Larger limbs and tree trunks will be left on site for disposal by the property owner.
- F. When work is necessary because trees have caused a power outage or because trees have died and present a hazard, all debris will be left for disposal by the property owner.

- G. Ash trees not infested with Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) (Infested= greater than 30% canopy dieback) will be removed to the Cooperative specifications. Cooperative specifications state that brush will be chipped and hauled off site and logs will be cut and stacked. Ash trees that are infested with EAB will be made safe (topped below the line) and all debris left on-site.
- H. Generally, stump removal will not be performed by the Cooperative.
- I. Tree management requests made by a member will be investigated to determine whether the tree poses a hazard to the power lines. The Cooperative will prune or remove trees that are hazardous to the power lines. The Cooperative may provide assistance by temporarily dropping secondary lines to accommodate member removal of a tree near the secondary. Disposal of all debris from a tree management request by a member is the member's responsibility.

### III. CHEMICAL APPLICATIONS

- A. It is the practice of the Cooperative to use herbicides to manage trees and brush within the right-of-way corridor. Tree growth regulators may be used to control the growth rate following pruning.
- B. Applications of chemicals to manage vegetation will be performed according to appropriate State and Federal regulations that govern their use.

Property owners who request a variance from chemical applications must complete a Request for Herbicide Variance agreement. Upon approval, property owners may be offered alternatives that include using other maintenance methods, self-maintaining brush or rerouting the line. Alternatives that involve additional expense to the Cooperative will be paid for in advance by the property owner.

### IV. NOTIFICATION

- A. Typically, door-to-door contacts, brochures, door hangers, phone messages, and/or electronic communications explaining policies and practices may be used to notify property owners of vegetation management work.
- B. No advance notice will be given prior to off-schedule work, including the removal of hazard or storm-damaged trees or power restoration activities.

### V. DEFINITIONS

- A. “Hazard Trees” – trees outside the right-of-way corridor, which are dead, dying, structurally defective or otherwise pose a danger of falling on the lines.
- B. “Distribution Line” – a distribution line is a generic term for a distribution voltage (2,400 volts to 35,000 volts) line that carries power from a substation to a residence or business. These lines may be overhead or underground.
- C. “Line Blowout” – the distance a power line can be expected to swing during high wind.
- D. “Primary Line” – a power line that carries medium voltage power to distribution transformers located near the member’s premises.
- E. “Secondary Line” – lower voltage lines from the distribution service transformer to the member’s service(s). The lines may be overhead or underground and may include equipment such as pole-mount utility secondary connectors (dead-ends) or ground mounted secondary voltage pedestals.
- F. “Transmission Line” – a bare, uninsulated, high-voltage (69,000 volts to 345,000 volts) overhead power line, usually strung from steel towers or tall wood, or metal, poles, that carries power from power generation plants to substations.

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

Employees are responsible for understanding and complying with this policy.

Member service representatives, or other qualified personnel, are responsible for communicating this policy to the member and initiating and completing the proper

Supervisors are responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with this policy.

The President/CEO is responsible for the overall administration of this policy as it applies to employees.

**REFERENCE:** Board Guideline 2, Electric Service  
Policy 302, Disconnection and Reconnection of Service  
Management Operating Guide 3D1, Service Fees

**ADOPTED:** June 29, 2017

**REVIEWED:** February 20, 2018

*The Cooperative reserves the right to change, suspend, eliminate, depart from, or add to all or any part of this **Policy** at any time, with or without prior notice, whenever the board of directors or management determines it is in the best interest of the Cooperative to do so.*



**People's Energy Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## APPENDIX A

### Tree Transplanting Notice

At People's Energy Cooperative (PEC), our priority is to provide safe, reliable electric service at a reasonable cost to members. One of the most serious obstacles to meeting this goal is vegetation contacting electrical equipment. We work to prevent this problem through our vegetation management program.

To control future maintenance costs, we routinely remove trees that are growing within the electric power line corridor that would otherwise require trimming someday. It is less costly to remove these tall-growing tree species while they are small. Allowing young trees to develop to the stage where removal or repeated trimming is necessary can be expensive and, in some cases, unattractive.

Some of the small trees growing in the electric power line corridor across your property are species that are not compatible with power lines and may pose outage problems in the future. Please help your cooperative avoid these reliability concerns by removing the trees or transplanting them to a more suitable location. Our tree contractor will postpone clearing of these trees until October 1. After that date, any trees remaining in the electric power line corridor will be removed to comply with standards adopted by the Cooperative.

Be sure to call Gopher State One Call (MN) at 1-800-252-1166 before you dig so underground utilities can be located. There is no charge for this service. All equipment, tools, personnel and the trees themselves must remain ten (10) feet or more from energized power lines at all times. Failure to do so could result in damage to electrical equipment, personal injury, or even death. We ask that all holes be filled to prevent potential injury to persons or equipment.

Thank you for your help in controlling maintenance costs and enhancing the reliability of the electric distribution system. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

## APPENDIX B

### Safety Clearance Action Threshold for Distribution Lines

A People's Energy Cooperative (PEC) supervisor or an appointed contractor arborist may, at times, exercise professional discretion in adjusting the Cooperative's vegetation management specifications to any tree-line clearance project. This document will describe the bottom limit of a forester/arborist's discretion for climbable trees. This boundary is useful to assure that appropriate clearance is achieved to minimize electrical risk to the public.

A critical protection clearance for primary and secondary conductors shall be established when vegetation management work is performed. Upon completion of any tree work on a property, no tree structures or parts may remain that could support the weight of a small child (40 lbs.) within specific protection zones, as herein defined. The protection zone consists of a rectangular shaped area measured ten (10) feet to the side of each conductor, ten (10) feet below the lowest conductor and ten (10) feet above the highest conductor.

Outside of regular maintenance cycles, tree structures or parts capable of supporting the weight of a small child (40 lbs.) and found to exist within these protection zones must receive the highest priority in applying an appropriate remedy.

"Readily Climbable" – A tree with any of the following characteristics:

1. A tree that has branches, branch stubs, or multiple trunks existing within a distance of ten (10) vertical feet from the ground.
2. A tree that has branches, branch stubs, or multiple trunks existing within a distance of ten (10) vertical feet from accessible structures such as wood piles, sheds, trailers, decks, playground equipment, etc.
3. A tree with access into its crown by way of an adjacent tree having similar characteristics as described in #1 or #2 above.
4. Any other conditions, structures or situations which in the opinion of a PEC supervisor or their direct appointees may cause a tree to be "readily climbable".

Trees fitting this definition may have remedies applied such as removing the tree, pruning branches or stubs, cutting selected trunks to create a single trunk tree, removing hand or foot holds, removing structures such as wood piles, sheds, trailers, decks, playground equipment, etc., or removal of the electrical hazard.



PEOPLE'S ENERGY COOPERATIVE  
Variance Fee Agreement  
For a Reduced Clearance Variance

At People's Energy Cooperative (PEC), our priority is to provide safe, reliable electric service at a reasonable cost to members. One of the most serious obstacles to meeting this goal is vegetation contacting electrical equipment. We work to prevent this problem through our vegetation management program.

Vegetation management comprises a large portion of our operating budget. It includes a designed right-of-way maintenance program that uses best management practices to help us establish an efficient and cost-effective maintenance cycle, while adhering to safety regulations.

We recognize that some members may have preferences with regard to how vegetation is managed on their property and individual concerns are important to us. The Cooperative policy is to assess a maintenance charge to members who request a variance from our normal specified tree-to-electric-equipment clearances. This provides members with an alternative to the more severe tree clearances sometimes needed for reliable service over the course of the maintenance cycle. The maintenance fee is calculated by estimating the time it will take to re-prune your trees prior to our next scheduled maintenance. If you choose this option, the fee is billed (and payable) in advance and could amount to several hundred dollars. It will appear on your electric bill within the next couple of months.

The Variance Fee Agreement form will outline the exact fee that will be placed on your electric bill. Please notify our tree contractor within (5) five business days if you decide not to participate in the maintenance fee program and would like your trees pruned or removed to the required specifications. Without a response within that time period, the contractor will maintain trees as you prefer, and the maintenance fee will be assessed on your electric bill. Your trees will then be scheduled for repeat maintenance.

The undersigned requests a variance to the standard vegetation management specifications adopted by People's Energy Cooperative (PEC) and hereby agrees to the following:

1. That he or she owns, is in legal possession, or has representation authority from the legal property owner, of a parcel of land in \_\_\_\_\_ County which includes PEC electric distribution line facilities described as follows:

PEC Map Location # \_\_\_\_\_

Address or legal description  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. That this agreement will not diminish any rights entitled to PEC by grants, easements, or licenses.
3. That the calculated cost of \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month or \$\_\_\_\_\_ per maintenance cycle for alternate maintenance proposed below associated with this variance will be paid by the undersigned. This amount may be charged to the electric bill or, if not a member of PEC, will be paid by check or money order before the variance will take effect.

**Alternate Maintenance Proposed: (contractor representative to complete)**

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_ Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Selected brush and trees **outside** of a home landscape will be pruned to provide adequate clearance until the next scheduled maintenance cycle rather than being removed.  
Species of tree (s) \_\_\_\_\_ Number of trees: \_\_\_\_\_ or spans: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Selected trees **within** a home landscape will be pruned less than required to provide adequate clearance during the maintenance cycle. Additional pruning will be required prior to the next regular maintenance cycle. Estimated Year to Re-Prune: \_\_\_\_\_  
Species of tree (s) \_\_\_\_\_ Number of trees: \_\_\_\_\_ or spans: \_\_\_\_\_
- If additional pruning proves to be unnecessary before the next regular maintenance cycle, the amount paid for this variance will be refunded.
- Brush, trees and stump sprouts will be hand cut or mechanically mowed as an alternative to applying herbicides for controlling problem vegetation.  
Number of spans involved: \_\_\_\_\_ from pole no. \_\_\_\_\_ to pole no. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other: (please describe) \_\_\_ payments of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_ months  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Member Name (Printed)	Signature of Payer	Date Signed
(_____) _____	(_____) _____	_____
Home Phone	Cell Phone	Email Address
_____		
Mailing Address	City	State      Zip Code

- Check this box if you would like a copy of this form:
  - Mailed to you
  - emailed to you at: (print) \_\_\_\_\_

**Return this signed and dated agreement within five (5) days to: People's Energy Cooperative, Attn: Patrick O'Connor, 1775 Lake Shady Ave South, Oronoco, MN 55960. Enclose payment if not a PEC member. Make all checks payable to People's Energy Cooperative.**

PEOPLE'S ENERGY COOPERATIVE  
Variance Fee Agreement

For a variance from the Herbicide Application Maintenance Program

At People's Energy Cooperative (PEC), our priority is to provide safe, reliable electric service at a reasonable cost to members. Keeping easement corridors clear of trees and brush is important for employee safety, reliable electric service and quick restoration of outages. Managing vegetation comprises a large part of our maintenance budget. Our program is designed to utilize best management practices to establish a cost-effective maintenance cycle.

We work very hard to manage vegetation to the benefit of all members. We also recognize that some members have strong preferences about how vegetation in the easement corridor is managed. Individual concerns about vegetation management are important to us, yet we also strive to treat all members equally. For this reason, we offer options to members who request a variance from the regular maintenance practices. You have a choice to participate in maintenance that is more acceptable to you without adding expense to other PEC member-owners who join in the regular maintenance program. We believe this is a fair and reasonable approach.

By selecting this alternative to regular maintenance, you will assume the additional expense to have a contractor cut or mow the vegetation at a later time. Our contractor's representative will review the maintenance requirements on your property and advise you of the exact amount to be added to your monthly electric bill. You may cancel this agreement if you reconsider the use of herbicides.

The undersigned requests a variance to the standard vegetation management specifications adopted by People's Energy Cooperative (PEC) and hereby agrees to the following:

1. That he or she owns, is in legal possession, or has representation authority from the legal property owner, of a parcel of land in \_\_\_\_\_ County which includes PEC electric distribution line facilities described as follows:

PEC Map Location # \_\_\_\_\_

Address or legal description  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. That this agreement will not diminish any rights entitled to PEC by grants, easements, or licenses.
3. That the calculated cost of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month or \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per maintenance cycle for alternate maintenance proposed below associated with this variance will be paid by the undersigned. This amount may be charged to the

electric bill or, if not a member of PEC, will be paid by check or money order before the variance will take effect.

**Alternate Maintenance Proposed: (contractor representative to complete)**

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_ Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Selected brush and trees **outside** of a home landscape will be pruned to provide adequate clearance until the next scheduled maintenance cycle rather than being removed.  
Species of tree (s) \_\_\_\_\_ Number of trees: \_\_\_\_\_ or spans: \_\_\_\_\_
- Selected trees **within** a home landscape will be pruned less than required to provide adequate clearance during the maintenance cycle. Additional pruning will be required prior to the next regular maintenance cycle. Estimated Year to Re-Prune: \_\_\_\_\_  
Species of tree (s) \_\_\_\_\_ Number of trees: \_\_\_\_\_ or spans: \_\_\_\_\_
- If additional pruning proves to be unnecessary before the next regular maintenance cycle, the amount paid for this variance will be refunded.
- Brush, trees and stump sprouts will be hand cut or mechanically mowed as an alternative to applying herbicides for controlling problem vegetation.  
Number of spans involved: \_\_\_\_\_ from pole no. \_\_\_\_\_ to pole no. \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_ payments of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ months

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Payer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone

(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code

- Check this box if you would like a copy of this form:
  - Mailed to you
  - emailed to you at: (print) \_\_\_\_\_

**Return this signed and dated agreement within five (5) days to: People's Energy Cooperative, Attn: Patrick O'Connor, 1775 Lake Shady Ave South, Oronoco, MN 55960. Enclose payment if not a PEC member. Make all checks payable to People's Energy Cooperative.**