

Can I prune trees myself?

Never attempt to prune trees near power lines yourself. Only qualified line clearance tree contractors are allowed to work within a minimum of 10 feet of high voltage lines. If there is any question, call MEWCO at 928-4540 for an inspection of your tree and line situation. "Service drops" - the lines that deliver electricity from MEWCO's power poles to the customer's meters are relatively low voltage (typically 120/240) and are normally pruned by MEWCO's crews.

If you are concerned about tree growth near your service drop you may call in and schedule an appointment to have your service drop disconnected to have the trees near this line trimmed safely. Please call MEWCO at 928-4540 to request a service drop disconnection. We recommend that you hire a professional tree service to do this trimming. Phone and cable company lines, usually found in the lowest position on a pole, do not have clearance requirements because they do not carry any significant electrical current.

Can you offer any advice for planting trees to avoid being in conflict with power lines?

If you're planning to plant new trees soon, remember these suggestions:

- Avoid planting trees directly beneath power lines or too close to electrical equipment. This will help guarantee healthy growth in a safe area.
- Consider planting trees of a slower growth or limited height variety, such as crab apples, hawthorns, ornamental pears or cherries.
- Check for overhead and underground utility lines. **Two working days before you dig call One Call Locates at 1-800-424-555.**

Can Modern recommend a company in my area for tree work away from power lines?

We cannot recommend a particular company, but we do encourage homeowners to make sure the company they choose has a qualified arborist on staff, is licensed and bonded and is affiliated with an arboricultural organization.

When is it necessary to remove a tree?

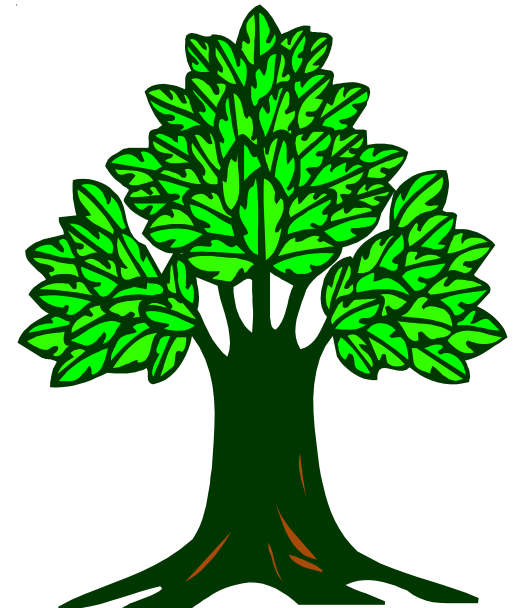
In some cases, Modern may have to remove trees that we deem a high risk to electrical service or to the general public. Fast growing trees under power lines that require pruning more than every four years can interfere with electrical service and cause power outages. A representative from MEWCO will notify the homeowner regarding the need for removal.

May we have those chips?

Yes. Wood chips are generated from trees that have been trimmed. These wood chips are available to customers, and can be delivered at your request when tree crews are in your area. Only full loads are available, the average load is about 8 - 10 yards. These wood chips consist of multiple tree species, are irregular in shape and color, and can include some twigs and rakings. For more information stop and ask a tree crew working in your area, or call MEWCO at 928-4540.



Frequently Asked Questions About Tree Trimming



Why do trees need to be trimmed?

MEWCO trims trees to minimize the likelihood of safety hazards and power outages. During high winds, strong thunderstorms, snow or ice storms, limbs and even whole trees can fall on electric lines, tearing down energized lines and equipment. Broken limbs can cause outages just by making the right kind of contact with electric lines and equipment.

When homes are built an easement is usually granted at the time of development that allows utilities access to maintain their lines and equipment. MEWCO holds easement rights on the land on which power lines and poles are located.

MEWCO requests landowners not to encroach on the easements with trees or buildings that may disrupt the operation of the lines.

Why did you trim so much of my tree?

Faster growing trees will require more clearance than slower growing trees. Smaller, slower growing trees will require less trimming and are more suitable for planting closer to electric lines. MEWCO takes into consideration what species, how fast the tree will grow, how close it is to the electric lines, and the type of voltage running through those lines. The required distance between vegetation and power lines varies from line to line depending on the voltage, local ordinances, tree characteristics and the tree owner.

How does MEWCO decide when to prune?

We have a routine maintenance program for tree and brush growth around power lines. In cases where tree conditions are worse, a line that begins to show an unusual number of tree-related outages may be trimmed sooner than originally anticipated.

Why don't you trim less and come back more often?

In determining our maintenance cycle, we consider our objective of providing safe, reliable service, as well as the costs involved. The costs of maintaining the electrical system, including tree-trimming costs, are recovered in our rates. It's a balance of providing you a safe, dependable electrical system while keeping costs within reason.

Why can't you shape trees while trimming them clear of lines?

The directional pruning method we use is endorsed by the International Society of Arboriculture. Directional pruning, also known as "lateral trimming," removes only those braches that conflict with power lines. Rather than cutting limbs back to unsightly and unnatural stubs, branches are pruned back to the center of the trunk where trees normally shed them. Future tree growth is directed away from the power lines.

Directionally pruned trees are less susceptible to disease and insects, and the overall structure of the tree is stronger and more resistant to high winds and ice.

Although the shape has been altered, it is recommended over topping or rounding of trees, which tends to promote quick regrowth of small, weakly attached shoots. We are in the business of providing you with safe, reliable power, and we have a responsibility to do that in an environmentally sound way.



Why can't you put the line underground?

In older neighborhoods with overhead lines, placing lines underground is difficult and expensive. Many trees are already well established. Placing power lines underground would require MEWCO to dig into the roots of the trees, possibly causing immediate harm and making them susceptible to diseases.

Converting overhead facilities to underground requires considerable trenching of existing pavement, roads, or other structures. Placing lines underground can cost many times more than what it costs to install power lines overhead.

How can the public help to reduce the frequency of outages?

First, understand that MEWCO trims trees as a service to our customers as an integral part of our goal to provide you with safe and reliable electric service. Second, try to keep an open mind when our line clearance crews explain why trimming is occurring. Finally, by allowing our crews to use the proper trimming techniques, your trees remain healthy, and the regrowth from the tree will tend to interfere less with power lines.

What if I have a complaint about your tree trimming policies or procedures?

If you live in MEWCO's service area, you may have received a card about tree trimming in your area. You do not need to respond to the notice you have received, but if you have any questions or concerns about the tree trimming work to be done, customers should call the Electric Department Supervisor at 755-9017.

