

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

we\* all need to  
keep trees away  
from power lines

Your guide to the Electricity (Hazards from Trees)  
Regulations 2003



we\* want to work together for a safer community



wellington  
electricity™



# we\* need to advise you about tree hazards in your neighbourhood

This brochure is to advise you that the trees in your neighbourhood which are growing too close to power lines may need to be trimmed shortly.

This work needs to be carried out under the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003 ('the Regulations'), as amended by the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Amendment Regulations 2024. Under these Regulations, the local electricity lines company has responsibilities to work with you to keep your trees away from overhead power lines.

Please take a few moments to read this brochure so you know what you need to do and what to expect when trees are trimmed in your neighbourhood.

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## TREES CLOSE TO POWER LINES ARE DANGEROUS

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Trees close to power lines can be dangerous for a number of reasons. If you touch a tree which is touching a power line, the result could be an electric shock or even death. Branches can break and fall onto lines, especially during high winds and storms, putting public safety and property at risk as well as interrupting power supply. By working with you, Wellington Electricity can help you avoid this safety risk and help reduce the impact of a loss of your and your neighbours' power supply.

The Regulations are in place for everyone's safety, and to help provide a reliable power supply. The complete regulations can be viewed at [www.legislation.govt.nz](http://www.legislation.govt.nz).

# The responsibilities of tree owners and electricity distribution companies

Under the Regulations, your local electricity distribution company is responsible for making sure tree owners are aware of not letting their trees grow too close to network power lines. On the Wellington Electricity network, Treescape is contracted to check network lines and notify tree owners if their trees are too close to our power lines. If you receive a notice, the trees may already be too close for you to safely trim them. In these cases, a professional arborist (authorised by Wellington Electricity to work close to power lines) will need to cut back the trees to a safe distance.

## Trees on public land

Trees on public land are usually the responsibility of the local council. Wellington Electricity is working with the local councils for them to keep their trees on public land clear of power lines. Professional arborists authorised by Wellington Electricity can also contract to trim the trees for the councils. In order to comply with these regulations for improving public safety and electricity reliability, trees must be trimmed to ensure there is a clear space maintained around the power lines at all times. The professional arborists generally can form a cutting plan that will encourage tree growth away from lines, however in some instances replanting a less vigorous species should be considered.

In most cases, the work will be done from the road reserve and the tree trimming crew will not need to enter private property. However, where trees extend over boundaries, or lines cross private land, it may be necessary to enter the property to trim the tree.

For future public safety, the local council may decide that some trees (especially fast-growing species such as sycamore, pine and eucalyptus) are no longer considered suitable as street trees and need to be removed completely. Local residents will be notified if a large tree of amenity value is to be removed.

## Trees on private land

The tree owner is responsible for keeping their trees clear of overhead power lines.

### The first cut or trim is free

Under the Regulations, the first cut or trim of a tree that has not previously been the subject of a cut or trim notice is free, unless a previous arrangement is in place. This service does not apply to trees near your private service lines – private service lines are not covered by the Regulations. Please see the ‘Trees near your service lines’ section in this brochure.

### The tree owner’s ongoing responsibility

On completion of our ‘first cut free’ responsibility, further tree work will be to the account of the tree owner. However we will maintain the cost of patrolling the lines and notify customers where tree work is required. Our arborists will continue to carry out regular inspections and will issue the tree owner with a ‘cut or trim notice’ when their tree is getting close to network power lines. Once the tree owner has been notified that the tree is encroaching the growth limit zone (a defined distance from the power line), the owner must:

- ★ Arrange for the tree to be trimmed within the time specified on the notice.
- ★ Use a professional arborist authorised by Wellington Electricity to work within 4.0 metres of electricity lines. This is because working near network lines is **extremely dangerous and must only be done by a**

**company employing a certified utility arborist.** A list of authorised arborist companies has been provided at [welectricity.co.nz/trees](http://welectricity.co.nz/trees).

## Declaring ‘no interest’

There are certain cases where a tree owner who does not want to be responsible for the tree can declare ‘no interest’ and Wellington Electricity will remove the tree if it is likely to cause an ongoing problem. There are specific regulations about which trees qualify for ‘no interest’; details of which can be found on our website.

## Beware of penalties

Under the regulations, a tree owner can be fined up to \$10,000 for failing to comply with any of the requirements of a cut or trim notice, plus \$500 per day for ongoing offences. A tree owner can also be liable for costs if network power lines or equipment are damaged by the tree.

## Keep the tree trimmed

Tree owners who do not wish to replace the tree with low growing plants can save the ongoing costs of complying with the regulations by having the tree trimmed to a safe clearance from the power line where they can maintain trimming themselves. A tree owner can trim the tree only when **all** parts of the tree are **4.0 metres or more** away from network power lines.

## Plant wisely to prevent problems

To avoid incurring the costs of regular tree trimming, choose low-growing plants and shrubs that will not grow close to power lines instead of trees. A guide for choosing suitable plants for planting under power lines is available at [welectricity.co.nz/trees](http://welectricity.co.nz/trees).

# Safe clearance and healthy trees

When trimming trees near power lines, the priority is for work to be undertaken safely with reference to distances that the general public and registered persons are permitted to work to around power lines. The outcome is to provide a safe clearance from the lines and equipment and to ensure the tree remains healthy. However, in order to correctly trim the tree and protect its health, it may be necessary to make a pruning cut beyond the cut-back zone – for instance, at the main trunk or stem.

The pruning techniques used by Wellington Electricity arborists follow the recommendations of Dr. Alex Shigo's Natural Target Pruning Techniques\*. Dr Shigo's techniques are accepted by many arborists, both locally and internationally, as best practice for utility arboriculture.

The technique sometimes uses a 'V' cut which encourages the growth of the tree to extend away from the line. Please be aware that the visual effect of this trimming can be dramatic directly after pruning. Using professional arborists ensures the tree recovers swiftly. Within six months the tree will be showing re-growth and the prune points will be less obvious.

Your patience and understanding is appreciated while the work is being done and while the trees adjust after trimming. Remember, keeping trees away from power lines is necessary for everyone's safety.

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*\*Dr. Alex Shigo's Natural Target Pruning Techniques & MIS314 – Utility Tree Work.*

# Trimming trees to a safe distance

Under the Regulations, trees must be kept outside the growth limit zone around network power lines.

Because safety is an important priority for the electricity industry, government legislation only allows permitted or registered persons to work within 4.0 metres of an overhead power line.

## Growth limit zone

The size of the growth limit zone depends on the voltage of the lines, as indicated in Table A.

The distances in Table A apply to power lines with spans between poles up to 150 metres. Additional clearances apply for spans greater than 150 metres.

Tree owners will be advised which voltage applies to lines near their trees in the cut or trim notice issued by Wellington Electricity.

## Cut-back zone

The cut-back zone extends 1.0 metre from the growth limit zone. Under a cut or trim notice, trees must be cut or trimmed so that they do not encroach into the cut-back zone.

## Notice zone

The notice zone extends 2.0 metres beyond the applicable growth limit zone. When a tree is in the notice zone, Wellington Electricity may issue a hazard warning notice to let the tree owner know that their tree must not encroach the growth limit zone.

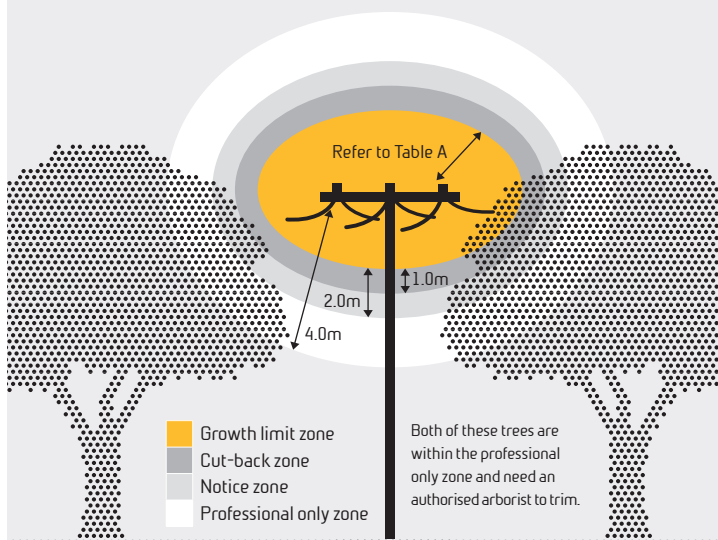
## 'Professional only zone'

**Trimming trees near network power lines is extremely dangerous work.** Under the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010, only authorised arborists are allowed to trim trees within 4.0 metres of network power lines, with





written permission of the network owner. A tree owner can trim a tree themselves provided **all** parts of the tree are **4.0 metres or more** away from network power lines. A list of authorised arborist companies has been provided on our website at [welectricity.co.nz/trees](http://welectricity.co.nz/trees).



**Table A – Uninsulated network lines with poles up to 150 metres apart<sup>1</sup>**

Voltage	Growth limit zone (GLZ) <sup>2</sup>	Cut-back zone (GLZ + 1m)	Notice zone (GLZ + 2m)	Professional only zone
33 kV	2.5 metres <sup>3</sup>	3.5 metres	4.5 metres	4.0 metres
11 kV	1.6 metres	2.6 metres	3.6 metres	4.0 metres
400/230 V	0.5 metres	1.5 metres	2.5 metres	4.0 metres

<sup>1</sup> Greater distances apply for longer spans – check the Regulations for details.

<sup>2</sup> For fully insulated lines, the growth limit zone is 0.5 metres regardless of voltage.

<sup>3</sup> Also “clear to the sky” vertically if the line is uninsulated and the tree is not protected under a district plan.

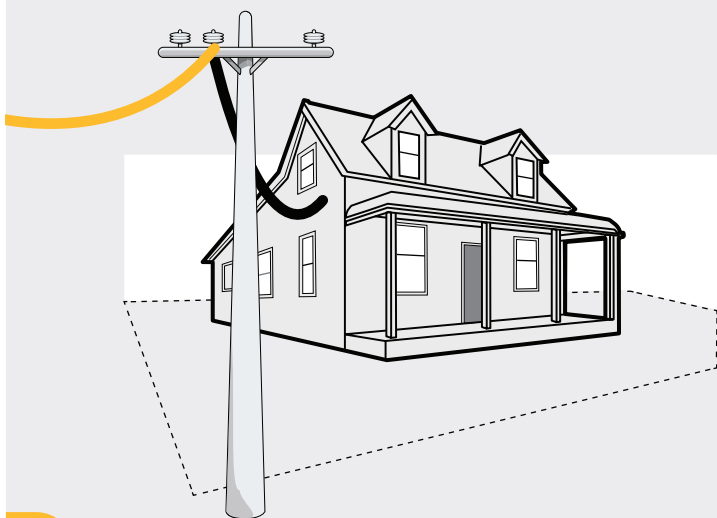
# Trees near your service lines

While the Regulations do not cover private service lines, it makes good sense to keep trees away from these lines for safety reasons and to protect your property and its power supply.

A property owner is responsible for the maintenance and repair of electrical lines and equipment on their property. These are known as service lines or private service lines. Wellington Electricity is responsible only for the lines and equipment up to the point of supply, which is usually on a pole at the boundary of the property.

This means that the electricity network company is not responsible for checking or trimming trees around private service lines, or for notifying property owners when those trees are too close to the lines. It is up to the property owner to keep trees away from their private service lines for safety and to protect their own power supply.

**The black line is one example showing your responsibility for service lines.**



## Trimming trees near service lines

You can hire a professional arborist such as Treescape to trim trees around your service lines. Treescape uses a residential crew to do this work, which is different to the crew working in the street which uses specialised equipment for working near network power lines.

You can also trim the tree yourself. You must be aware, however, that private service lines are dangerous so, unless you are using Treescape or an arborist qualified to work around live lines, always have your power supply temporarily disconnected before commencing any work near service lines.

To arrange a free\* temporary disconnection, contact your electricity retailer (their details can be found on your power bill).

**For a quote and to book a crew to trim trees near your service line call:**

**0800 TREEWORk (0800 873 396)**

\* Wellington Electricity provides this service at no cost, but your electricity retailer might charge you an administration fee to process the request.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH:

Absolutely Positively  
**Wellington City Council**

Me Heke Ki Pōneke

**HUTT CITY**  
TE AWA KAIRANGI

**porirua**city

 Te Kaunihera o  
**Te Awa Kairangi ki Uta**  
Upper Hutt City Council

For more information about tree trimming around power lines visit [welectricity.co.nz/trees](https://welectricity.co.nz/trees) or call:

**0800 248 148**

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**Treescape**

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electricity™

**we**★