

Overview

Our customers want reliable power – in both good weather and bad. And while the trees that thrive throughout our 104,000 square miles of service area are a source of tremendous pride, they are also one of the main causes of power outages.

Duke Energy works consistently to balance aesthetics with our goal to provide safe, reliable power to the households and businesses that depend on us. It is our responsibility to ensure power lines are free of trees and other obstructions that could disrupt electric service. Trees that are close to power lines must be trimmed or cut down to ensure they don't cause power outages, and Duke Energy does much of this work proactively.

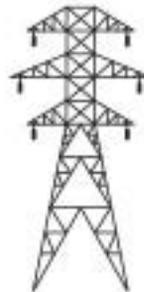
Our crews use a variety of methods to manage vegetation growth along distribution circuits and transmission power line rights of way, including vegetation pruning, felling (cutting down) and herbicides. These methods are based on widely accepted standards developed by the tree care industry and approved by the American National Standards Institute for tree care maintenance and operations.



Vegetation Management

Keeping the lights on.

Examples of typical transmission and distribution structures



Transmission lines



Distribution lines

Transmission rights of way

High-voltage transmission lines provide large amounts of electricity over long distances. The transmission lines in your community are part of the larger, interconnected grid system that powers an entire region, not just the community through which the lines run. Federal rules are more stringent for some transmission lines, depending on the voltage, and may include fines up to \$1 million per day for tree-related outages. Duke Energy manages its grid to provide reliable operation of transmission facilities while adhering to regulations and easement rights.

Distribution rights of way

Distribution lines carry power from local substations to homes and businesses. A distribution right of way provides access to a strip of land so that utilities (electric, telephone, cable, water and/or gas) may build and maintain service lines. Duke Energy manages rights of way to provide reliable delivery of electricity.

Vegetation management methods

Duke Energy uses an Integrated Vegetation Management approach, which includes careful pruning, selective herbicidal application and tree felling. This allows us to evaluate power line areas and determine the best method for maintaining reliable service.

The objective of an Integrated Vegetation Management program is to maintain the lines – before the trees and brush are close enough to cause outages – in a manner that is consistent with good arboricultural practices.

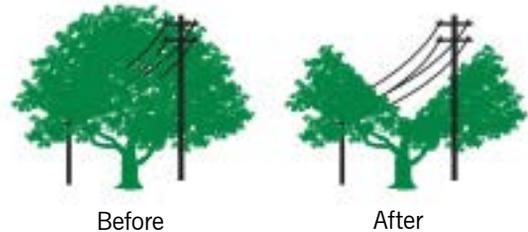
Duke Energy uses specific circuit information, reliability data and other indicators to prioritize lines for tree pruning and removal.

Pruning methods

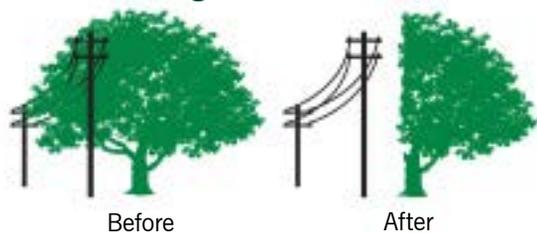
We do not “round” trees over because it’s not good for a tree’s health. We subscribe to directional or targeted pruning. These methods are endorsed by the tree care industry as the best pruning techniques for tree health.

Examples of trimming methods

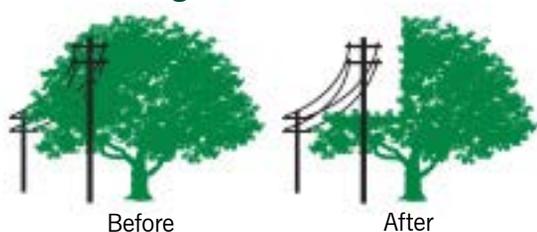
“V” trimming



Side trimming



“L” trimming



Directional pruning involves cutting a limb back to another limb (or lateral) so that future growth of the resulting limb is directed away from the power lines. The basis for this type of pruning is that each limb removed from a tree is removed either where it joins another limb or at the trunk. With directional pruning, tree growth causes less impact to public safety and electrical service. This procedure is different from the philosophy of “rounding” trees over in which limbs are cut at arbitrary points, normally leaving unhealthy “stub” cuts, which can damage the tree.

Pruning vs. cutting down

Each tree is different and must be considered individually. Trees with trunks close to the power lines may require much more pruning than trees located farther from the line. Additionally, not all pruning techniques are appropriate for all tree species.

When pruning, our trimming professionals make every attempt to trim for sufficient clearance until we return on our next planned maintenance.

Before deciding to remove a tree, we first evaluate its health and proximity to the lines. A tree may have a decayed portion on the trunk. The entire tree may be dead or in the process of dying, which might cause it to break or fall. It may have soil that is severely eroded away from the root system, making it more likely to fall.

Sometimes trees are required to be cut down when they are too close to power lines or when they would have to be pruned severely.

Herbicide applications

Duke Energy uses environmentally responsible herbicide applications to control tall growing incompatible plants within power line rights of way. Our objective is to maintain low growing vegetation to minimize potential electric power interruptions, which also enhances wildlife habitat.

We use professional contractors to apply herbicide by utilizing different methods including foliar, stump, stem and vine applications.

Duke Energy contractors have been trained on the proper, safe and environmentally responsible techniques of managing plant growth. All products used by Duke Energy are registered by the Environmental

Protection Agency and approved by appropriate state agencies.

Debris removal

The majority of Duke Energy's pruning and cutting occurs during planned maintenance. We typically dispose of any small limbs and brush in landscaped settings. The larger pieces of wood are cut into manageable lengths for the property owner's use. In non-landscaped sites, pruned vegetation and wood debris are left in place to bio-degrade. When an "Act of God" (e.g., lightning, ice storms, high winds, hurricanes, tornadoes) causes trees or other vegetation to fall across power lines and thus create power outages, we cut the trees and brush so poles and lines can be repaired and re-energized. Disposal of any wood, limbs or debris resulting from this type of emergency operation is the property owner's responsibility.

For more information visit duke-energy.com/safety/right-of-way-management.asp.

Visit the Arbor Day Foundation at arborday.org/treelineusa for information about planning and planting vegetation around electrical facilities.