



# Transmission Right of Way Clearing and Maintenance

*A Balanced Approach to Vegetation Management*

Appalachian Power  
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## A History of Environmental Stewardship

American Electric Power (AEP) owns the nation's largest electric transmission system, a nearly 39,000-mile network of high-voltage power lines carrying electricity to more than five million customers in 11 states. North America demands a safe, reliable electric grid and AEP's lines form a substantial part of the backbone of this grid.

To safeguard the reliability of our transmission delivery system and your electric service, we have developed a vegetation management program to control the growth of trees and other vegetation around our transmission facilities and rights of way. The program balances our customers' need for reliable energy with respect for the natural environment that surrounds our facilities.

### Our goals are to:

- Protect our system and minimize outages
- Minimize any adverse environmental impacts
- Ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations
- Perform our work as safely and economically as possible, and
- Maintain a positive relationship with land owners and the public.

This brochure will provide you with an overview of our policies for vegetation management in our transmission rights of way, and hopefully address the majority of questions you may have about those policies.

## Federal Requirements

In August 2003, a major power outage struck the northeastern United States and southeastern Canada. Investigators found that a root cause of the blackout was a tree that had come in contact with a transmission line.

As a result of that event, new national standards with substantial penalties for non-compliance were created governing vegetation management practices for lines that are considered part of the national transmission grid. The standards were developed by the North



**Appalachian Power's Environment, Safety & Health Philosophy:** No aspect of operations is more important than the health and safety of people. Our customers' needs are met in harmony with environmental protection.

American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) under the direction of the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The standards mandate that minimum clearance distances between transmission lines and the nearest vegetation must be established by each utility. Our policies ensure that we are in compliance with the federal guidelines. Appalachian Power's right-of-way easements typically grant the right to remove trees and other obstructions as well as rights to access, inspect, repair and maintain transmission lines.

To conform to the standards and maintain the reliability of the transmission system, we've made it a policy to remove all trees and other woody-stemmed vegetation within the rights of way of power lines that are considered part of the national transmission grid if the distance from the conductors to the ground is less than 100 feet.

However, under certain circumstances (unique topographic and/or environmentally-sensitive conditions) Appalachian Power may allow compatible, low-growing species to remain in the right of way. In maintained areas (i.e. mowed yards, lawns and public areas), Appalachian Power will work with landowners to determine if trees and other vegetation deemed compatible with safe operation of the line may remain. In all cases, compatible species are limited to those that grow no more than 15 feet tall at maturity.

This policy limits the potential for vegetation to interfere with the operation of the line. In areas where the distance from wires to the ground is greater than 100 feet, only vegetation that will potentially interfere with the operation of the line is removed, trimmed, or otherwise controlled.



## General Policies

**Public Safety** – Electricity can be deadly, so that's why we have vegetation management specialists trained in safe clearances and tree removal. Customers should never attempt to trim or remove tree limbs near or adjacent to any power lines. If you're concerned about a tree that may be in contact with a power line, contact Appalachian Power at one of the numbers listed in this brochure.

**Work Planning/Notification** – Appalachian Power closely follows jurisdictional regulations that pertain to advising property owners of our planned activities.

**Tree Removal** – The Appalachian Power vegetation management program emphasizes tree removal to promote long-term vegetation control.

**Tree Pruning** – In those rare cases when we find that tree removal is not practical, we will prune trees to satisfy federal guidelines. Manual pruning is performed by qualified line clearance arborists in compliance with standards set by the International Society of Arboriculture, the American National Standards Institute and the Tree Care Industry Association. Access, terrain and tree height may necessitate the use of mechanical pruning

equipment. In very difficult terrain or inaccessible areas, an aerial saw may be used for side trimming on transmission rights of way.

**Vegetation Clearing** – We employ manual and mechanized clearing where the vegetation is too tall for herbicide applications and aerial application is not possible, or where the immediate removal of vegetation is necessary.

**Herbicide Application** – We apply herbicides to control the root systems of woody stemmed vegetation and to reduce the cost of future maintenance. In all cases, Appalachian Power uses herbicides that are registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the appropriate state regulatory agency. The herbicides are applied by licensed application businesses that employ trained applicators.

**Debris Cleanup** – The debris that results from our clearing activities is left on the rights of way to naturally decompose and return nutrients to the soil and reduce the possibility of soil erosion. The company ensures that any brush that falls into roadways, waterways, fences, lawns or pastures or other maintained areas is collected and removed to a wooded area of the right of way.

## Working With Property Owners

We continually strive to strike a balance between service reliability and respect for the natural landscape.

We continue to invest time and resources into public education concerning proper tree care and sound environmental practices. Appalachian Power is an active participant in many organizations that support responsible vegetation management practices including: the National Arbor Day Foundation, the Utility Arborist Association, the International Society of Arboriculture, and various state and local vegetation management organizations.

## Responsive to Concerns

While Appalachian Power goes to great lengths to collaborate with our neighbors, there are times when a landowner and the company may disagree on a specific issue. If that happens, we work diligently to resolve the problem and attempt to reach a mutually agreeable solution.

If you have a question or concern about Appalachian Power's transmission right-of-way vegetation management program, please contact us at one of the following telephone numbers:

### Appalachian Power

Tennessee: 1-800-967-4237

Virginia: 1-800-956-4237

West Virginia: 1-800-982-4237

