

# Noble REMC

## Vegetation Management Program

### Vegetation Management Program

Noble REMC has several vegetation management programs designed to minimize contact between trees and power lines. The program includes all of the following tasks: **customer notification, inspections, pruning, tree removals, debris disposal, herbicides and preventative planning recommendations.**

This program has REMC personnel along with assistance from private contractors clearing and pruning trees year-round. Noble REMC clears power line rights-of-way on a 3-year cycle.

### Vegetation Management Purpose

Noble REMC recognizes that trees are valuable assets to our members and to the quality of life in our area. However, this must be balanced with the constant threat to our members' electric service because trees and tree branches are the most frequent causes of power outages for your co-op. Trees adjacent to Noble REMC's rights-of-way must be kept pruned and clear of the power lines. This helps us provide a safe and reliable supply of electricity to our members.

The vegetation management program aims to ensure member safety and service reliability. Trees must be pruned to prevent contact between power lines and tree limbs to reduce the constant threat of causing tree-related power outages. Trees near power lines are a safety hazard and must also be removed or pruned on a regular basis to prevent children from climbing the trees and coming in contact with power lines. Limbs hanging over power lines must be pruned because of the threat of falling on the power lines during inclement weather and cause extensive outages and damage. Trees that grow too close to power lines can sway during inclement weather, such as thunder storms or high winds, and touch the power lines. This gives electricity a path to the ground, which it is always seeking, and causes a potentially serious fire and safety hazard along with power outages.

### Customer Notification

Advance notification of right-of-way vegetation maintenance is given to all members prior to commencement of work. Normally, a minimum of two weeks' notice is given. Noble REMC's right-of-way supervisor will attempt advance notification in the following ways:

1. Personal visit to property
2. If no one is home, door hanger with contact information will be left
3. Telephone calls

However, notification and personal contact is not always possible. In the event of an emergency, advance notice will not be given. Vegetation maintenance, such as spraying crews, pre-cycle maintenance crews and some pruning crews, move quickly through an area. Often, if no one is home when personal contact is attempted, and the pruning is routine – the same kind of tree maintenance procedure performed during the previous re-clearing cycle – the crew may re-clear vegetation while they are onsite without speaking with the member or property owner.

### Inspections

This is designed to reduce tree-related outages by inspecting for dead and danger trees, as well as trees that may have grown too close to the power lines since the last vegetation maintenance cycle. Noble REMC crews work on this program year-round.

### Pruning

Lateral and side tree pruning are the most acceptable methods for utilities in line clearance vegetation maintenance. Lateral pruning is the act of trimming a limb, one that is large enough to withstand new growth, off the main trunk. Branches growing into the utility line space are removed, and those branches growing away from or parallel to the power lines remain. Wherever possible, the trees are allowed to achieve their normal mature height with crown development away from the power lines.

Trees near primary lines should be pruned before they actually touch the power lines and enough clearance must be obtained so that the trees do not grow back into the lines before the vegetation maintenance crews make the cycle and prune them again. The exact amount of clearance obtained at any given site varies considerably and is dependent on the voltage and construction of the power line, the combined movement of the power lines and trees during adverse weather conditions, the normal re-growth of the species of trees involved and the position of the trees in relation to the power lines.

**Distribution Line Clearances:** The normal minimum clearance for primary lines and open-wire secondaries is 10 feet from the power lines on each side. The preferred clearance of Noble REMC's vegetation management is 12-15 feet from the power lines on each side. The preferred clearance on primary lines helps reduce tree-related outages during inclement weather and storms. Minimum clearance on primary power lines will be from ground line to sky. Every effort will be made to eliminate all trees, tree parts and growth points beneath the wires and all weak, diseased and dead limbs above the wires, which may fall or blow into the wires.



Noble REMC's vegetation maintenance crews will prune the limbs near a member's service wire to the residence if requested by the member or found during a routine systematic re-clearing scheduled in the area.

Pruning limbs for outdoor area lighting is the responsibility of the member. The service wires will only be cleared of small branches, not large limbs or trees, over the service wires.

If a member, or a private tree company hired by the member, feels that it is unsafe to work close to the service wire or to cut or remove trees next to it, please call Noble REMC and schedule an appointment for us to disconnect the overhead wire and re-install it after the work is complete. There is no charge for this service when performed during normal business hours.

## Tree Removal

**Danger Trees:** Noble REMC will cut danger trees that are adjacent to our power lines along the edge of the right-of-way. All dead and danger trees will be cut and left onsite.

**Customer Request for Tree Removal:** Noble REMC will cut down trees that are directly below the primary power lines in our rights-of-way or so close to the power lines that they require drastic pruning. The limbs will be chipped and hauled away. The tree trunk and larger limbs will be cut into whatever lengths the tree's owner and Noble REMC's right-of-way supervisor agree upon.

Noble REMC reserves the right to refuse to cut or remove any tree which, in its judgment, can be safely cut or removed by a private tree company with no damage to our lines.

## Debris Disposal

Branches and brush debris from the scheduled rights-of-way maintenance activities in improved areas, such as yards and lawns, will be chipped, cleaned up and hauled away. The yards and lawn areas should be left as clean as they were before the work was performed. Large limbs and wood will be cut into lengths as agreed upon between the member and Noble REMC's right-of-way supervisor and left onsite.

If Noble REMC agrees to grind the members' stumps, a specific completion date is unknown. Noble REMC contracts this service, and the contractor systematically plans his route when in the area. Noble REMC will make every attempt to have the stump removed in a timely manner.

If you would like to have some of the chips from the branch chipping operation for mulch or compost, it is best to ask the vegetation maintenance tree crews when they are working in your area. You may also obtain some of these chips by calling Noble REMC at 800-933-7362. The chips are free and delivered by the truckload in an "as is" condition to the closest areas where the crews are working. Small amounts will not be delivered. Noble REMC crews, as well as contractors, will not be held responsible for damage to yards from the delivery of chips as requested by member.

Branches, wood and brush debris generated as a result of storms and storm restoration will not be cleaned up by Noble REMC. Disposal of dead trees and limbs will be the responsibility of the property owner.

## **Herbicides**

Noble REMC has worked with Purdue University, chemical manufacturers, other utilities, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and others to explore options for vegetation control. The results have been strong recommendations to use species-specific, low-volume herbicide applications in more situations. Research, demonstrations and other right-of-way programs show a definite improvement of rights-of-way treated with selective low-volume applications of herbicides using a variety of application techniques and timing.

Herbicides are applied on a systematic 3-year cycle similar to the pruning and clearing of trees and brush. Notification of the spray cycles is published in Noble REMC's monthly publication, *Electric Consumer*, usually one month in advance of our spraying.

Noble REMC also sprays herbicides in substations and around other distribution equipment located along our right-of-way. Noble REMC will spray around this equipment in spring and follow up with spot spraying throughout the growing season to prevent undergrowth.

This program selectively sprays undesirable brush and trees on rights-of-way on a 3-year systematic spraying cycle. Noble REMC's right-of-way personnel are trained and certified in the use of herbicides to control vegetation. This program reduces the amount of pruning that needs to be done, which allows our crews to more effectively control tree growth.

***New Rights-of-Way Clearing Program:*** New rights-of-way are cleared of trees and vegetation to the clearance specification of Noble REMC's engineering department.

## **Preventative Planning Recommendations**

Noble REMC's vegetation management supports the philosophy of "the right tree in the right place" as a means of having a more attractive community to live in and a more dependable electrical system to serve its members. When you start landscaping around your home and in your yard, please look up before planting trees. Do not plant trees if power lines are overhead. If the power lines are overhead, please evaluate the species of trees you wish to plant outside of the power line right-of-way.

For help in selecting tree species and to determine the distance for you to plant trees from the power line right-of-way, please contact Noble REMC at 800-933-7362.