



Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

CONSUMER FACT SHEET

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

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The Basics of TREE TRIMMING

In most cases, trees and other vegetation are planted for several reasons including aesthetics, sound or erosion control, providing shade, or bringing wildlife to a yard.

Electric utilities are allowed to cut back branches and limbs or even entire trees that are in a utility right-of-way and have the potential to damage utility lines and interrupt services. Many of the requirements electric utilities must follow are included in the vegetation management plans each company is required to develop and submit to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO).

The following are frequently asked questions that consumers often have about Ohio utilities and tree trimming:

Why do electric companies trim trees on my property?

Electric utilities are required to maintain the reliability and safety of their system, which is partly done by keeping tree branches away from their power lines, including those lines that are located on a consumers' property.

Do electric companies trim the trees themselves?

Ohio electric companies often hire professional tree trimmers to help remove branches that may interfere with the power lines.

Do tree trimmers use any standards to protect the trees?

When trimming, the electric companies or their contractors attempt to cut trees in ways that reduce stress and ensure the smallest possibility of disease for the tree. Typically, tree trimmers use standards by the Tree Care Industry Association

(TCIA) and the International Society of Arboriculture.

How much trimming will be done? Are there guidelines?

Depending on how the power lines are used, trimming will usually involve removing branches to allow several feet of clearance around a power line. This policy follows federal health and safety guidelines that help protect tree trimmers that are not certified to work closely with power lines.

How will I know if tree trimming is planned for my street?

Consumers may be notified when tree trimming will occur in their area. The notices, usually hung on the door or mailed, include a telephone number to call with questions. Depending on the company, the notice can be anywhere from two or more days prior to the trimming. Notice does not have to be given and this procedure does not apply to emergency trimming performed in an effort to restore service after a storm.

Consumers also should be aware that trees are considered a homeowner's property. If tree trimming is planned, consumers may have to make arrangements for the removal of limbs and other debris at their own expense.

What can I do to avoid having the electric company trim my trees?

The following are steps you can take to help avoid the electric company trimming trees in your yard:

- ▶ When planting trees in your yard, select a location away from power lines;
- ▶ Check with a plant nursery about the correct types of trees for planting in the space you have available;

Continued on next page

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- ▶ Each year, trim all trees and bushes that are under and near power lines to keep them from growing toward the lines.

What if I have concerns about tree trimming that will be performed in my area?

Customers should call the tree trimming service or the electric utility prior to the trimming to get information about the work to be done and express their concerns. If the customer is not satisfied with the information received, they should contact the PUCO at 1-800-686-7826.

Are utility representatives or their tree trimmers allowed to enter my property?

Yes, utility representatives or contractors may enter property to trim any branches that are touching or are close to power lines. It is necessary to enter private property so that the reliability of the power system is maintained and outages are avoided. Utility companies have this right through an "easement." An easement is essentially permission for the utility to maintain its power lines on a customer's property. Easements are filed with the County Recorder's office and copies are typically kept on file at the utility.

People need to be aware when choosing trees and other plants for their yards that certain types should not be planted under or near overhead power lines.

What can I do to prepare for tree trimming?

It is a good idea to take pictures of trees near power lines before the trimming and to get in writing the trimming that will be done. Most tree trimmers will try to work with customers regarding their concerns with trimming when possible.

If there is a certain way you prefer your tree to be shaped, you can personally trim all trees on your own property. This should be done carefully to avoid personal injury or damage to the utility lines. Check with your local utility for

their requirements regarding the distance between power lines and branches.

The utility companies do not trim vegetation that follows the path of your drop line. The drop line is the line that runs from the main line to your house. Any interference along this line is the property-owners responsibility. Always call 8-1-1 before digging in your yard to avoid buried utility lines.

Overhead power lines

- ▶ Always plant trees at least 15 feet away from the power lines.
- ▶ If you must plant under or within 15 feet of the power line (Zone 1), plant trees that will stay under 25 feet in height.
- ▶ In Zone 2, trees should be planted 15 feet to 35 feet away from power lines. Trees that stay under 40 feet tall are recommended.
- ▶ Trees that grow taller than 40 feet are recommended for planting in Zone 3 (at least 35 feet away from lines).

Buried power lines

- ▶ Before planting any type of vegetation, call the Ohio Utilities Protection Service at 1-800-362-2764 to locate any underground utilities. This can help prevent outages and injury when digging holes for planting. While normal depth of most buried utility lines is two feet, this can vary. Most new trees should be planted at depths greater than two feet.
- ▶ Trees and other vegetation should not be planted within 10 feet of any utility service equipment, including access boxes for buried power lines.

By law, everyone MUST contact the Ohio Utilities Protection Service, 8-1-1 or 1-800-362-2764 or www.oups.org, at least 48 hours but no more than 10 working days (excluding weekends and legal holidays) before beginning ANY digging project.

The Basics of TREE TRIMMING

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The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

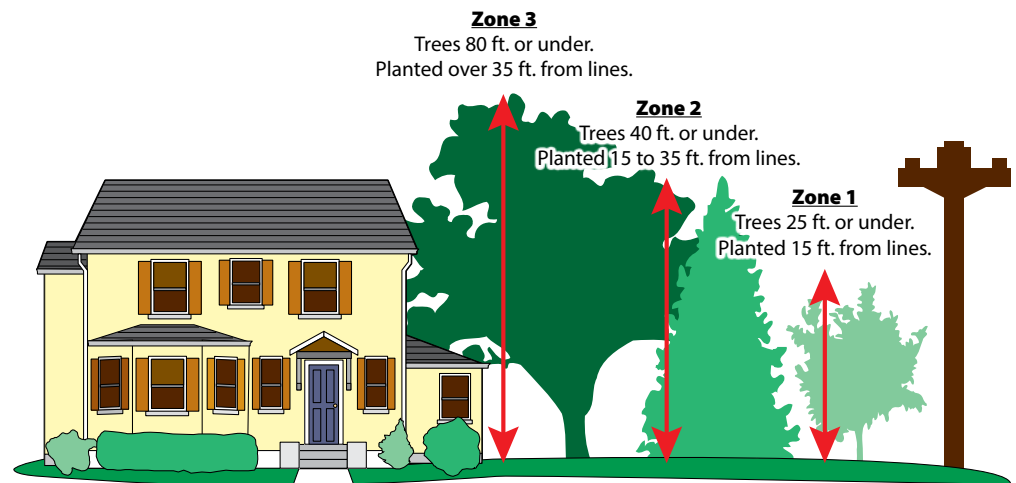
The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at www.occ.ohio.gov.



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A sampling of types of recommended trees by height



Zone 1 trees (maximum height of 25 feet)

- ▶ Eastern Redbud (20 feet)
- ▶ Amur Maple (25 feet)
- ▶ Chinese Dogwood (25 feet)
- ▶ Washington and Green Hawthorns (25 feet)
- ▶ Flowering Crabapples (10 to 25 feet)
- ▶ Flowering Cherry and Plum (25 feet)
- ▶ Japanese Tree Lilac (25 feet)
- ▶ Red Buckeye (20 to 25 feet)
- ▶ Russian Olive (20 feet)

Zone 2 trees (maximum height of 40 feet)

- ▶ Paperbark Maple (35 feet)
- ▶ Goldenrain (35 feet)
- ▶ Callery Pear (35 feet)
- ▶ Amur Corktree (40 feet)
- ▶ Japanese Pagodatree (35 feet)
- ▶ Hedge Maple (35 feet)
- ▶ Lacebark Elm (35 feet)
- ▶ Crabapples (35 feet)

Zone 3 trees (maximum height of 80 feet)

- ▶ Freeman Maple (65 feet)
- ▶ Ginkgo (60 feet)
- ▶ Thornless Honeylocust (65 feet)
- ▶ American Sweetgum (55 feet)
- ▶ Pine Oak (65 feet)

- ▶ Northern Red Oak (60 feet)
- ▶ Baldcypress (50 feet)
- ▶ Silver Linden (60 feet)
- ▶ Hybrid Elms (60 feet)
- ▶ River Birch (50 to 60 feet)
- ▶ European Beech (60 to 80 feet)
- ▶ Burr Oak (60 to 80 feet)
- ▶ Shumard Oak (60 to 80 feet)

Additional Information

For additional information, visit your electric company's website or call toll free at one of the numbers below:

- ▶ [FirstEnergy Utilities](#)
1-800-589-3101
(Cleveland Electric Illuminating)
1-800-447-3333
(Toledo Edison)
1-800-633-4766 (Ohio Edison)
- ▶ [AEP Ohio](#)
1-800-672-2231
- ▶ [Duke Energy Ohio](#)
1-800-544-6900
- ▶ [AES Ohio \(formerly Dayton Power and Light\)](#)
1-800-433-8500

To file a complaint about utility-based tree trimming, contact the PUCO at 1-800-686-7826.