



Trees and Transmission Lines

Transpower is the state-owned enterprise that owns and operates the National Grid - or high voltage transmission network - that carries electricity around New Zealand.

We are legally required to maintain our lines to minimise any tree-related interruptions to the supply of electricity.

This information sheet provides important information to landowners and tree owners on their responsibilities for managing vegetation (particularly trees) near overhead transmission lines. Vegetation management is essential around Transpower's lines because of the potential threat to:

- public safety through the presence of hazardous voltages around trees that contact or are in close proximity to the lines
- the reliability of the electricity supply (due to loss of supply through tree fall or flashover)
- Transpower assets and private property, particularly caused by vegetation too close to, or falling on lines creating flashovers and subsequently catching fire.



Flashover: If trees touch high voltage conductors (or wires), or electricity “jumps” the gap to a tree, then a major electrical discharge may occur to the tree.

This discharge/flashover could cause trees to ignite and serious injury or death to bystanders. Tree or forest fires destroy property and threaten people's and animals' lives.

What is Transpower's legal authority for tree maintenance?

The Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003 came into effect on 1 July 2005 and compliance with the regulations is mandatory. The Regulations:

- define safe separation distance between trees and overhead lines;
- specify who is responsible for ensuring separation distances are maintained;
- place potential liability on tree owners if the Regulations are breached; and
- provide an arbitration system to resolve disputes relating to tree trimming.

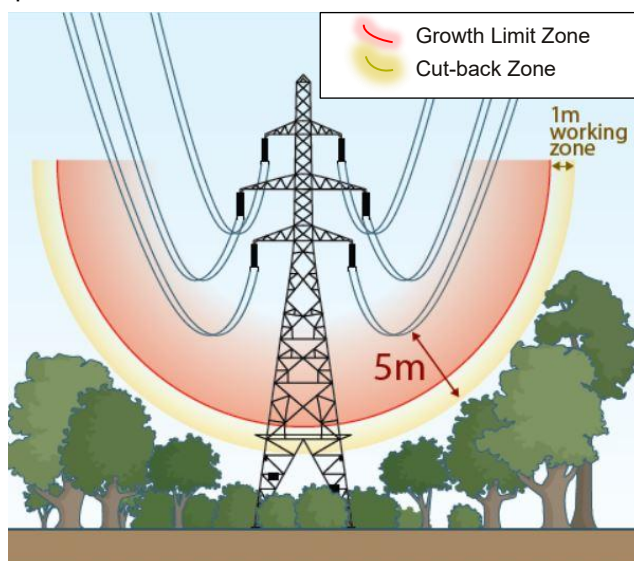
In our view the landowner/tree owner has a duty of care to Transpower to take reasonable steps to protect Transpower's lines from damage.

Why remove trees rather than trim?

Where a tree encroaches or may in future encroach on the Growth Limit Zone or Cut-back Zone Transpower's service provider will seek your agreement as the tree owner to fell that tree or trees.

Trees may also need to be completely removed when they are diseased or are on unstable ground, and would cause damage to the line if they fell.

If you do not agree to felling then you assume responsibility for the management of the tree(s) and any damage that it may cause. Dependent on the level of risk, a Transpower representative may wish to discuss future tree management with you.



Distances are measured from the maximum sag and swing of the conductor (wire)



Who pays for the trees to be felled or trimmed?

If you accept tree ownership then you are responsible for meeting the ongoing vegetation management costs to comply with the Regulations (other than the first cut which by law Transpower must pay).

However, for safety reasons we will arrange for our qualified Service Providers to undertake the trimming. In some situations, Transpower may seek to recover reasonable costs from you. The Regulations allow for this cost-recovery to occur.

As the tree owner, if you do not want to take responsibility for the tree, you can send us a written “no-interest tree notice” which means that we will take responsibility for the tree, including removing or trimming the tree if we decide this is the best course of action.

Transpower has a standard “no-interest tree notice” form for landowners to fill out and return. If you would like to be sent a copy, please call us toll free on 0508 LANDOWNER (526 369).

If a tree requires such a degree of trimming that it would become unavoidably disfigured or presents a safety risk, it may be more appropriate to remove the tree and replant a more suitable species.

Debris

When Transpower trims trees it is not responsible for the clean-up, however we will ensure that the site is left safe and access ways not obstructed. When Transpower fells trees, the agreement to fell will cover the management of debris.

Can I trim/fell the trees myself?

You should not attempt to prune any vegetation growing near overhead transmission lines. There is significant risk of electrocution through getting too close to a live conductor. Only specially-trained utility arborists should work around transmission lines. Not all arborists have the necessary competencies to work around our network.

If trees owned by you come into contact with, and cause damage to Transpower’s transmission network, including contact during the act of tree trimming, you may be liable for that damage including any damage caused to third parties. You may also be liable for the costs of putting out any fire and damage attributable to a fire caused by vegetation coming into contact with a line during your trimming.

Please contact us toll free 0508 LANDOWNER (526 369) to arrange for our Service Provider to cut your tree(s).

Don’t plant trees near transmission lines

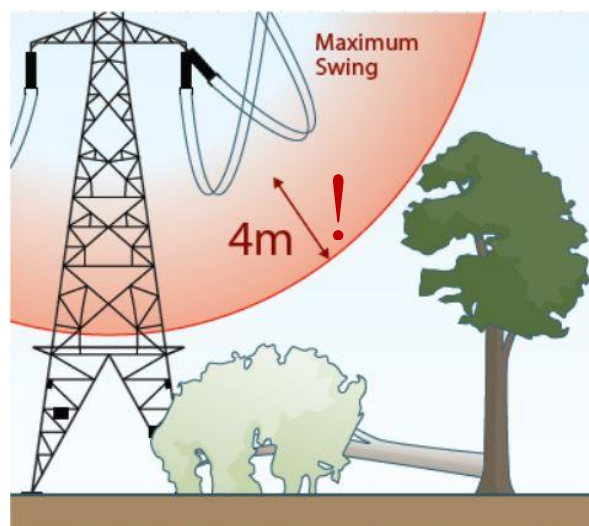
To avoid later problems, plant trees well away from transmission lines. It is very important to think beforehand about the mature height and spread of a tree to ensure it can grow without impacting the lines. Please ensure you discuss your planting plans with Transpower’s service provider before planting.

Planting directly under lines should not exceed 2m in height. When planted, trees (at full maturity height) should not be able to fall within 4m of a transmission line conductor.

Forestry

For forestry near transmission lines, (woodlots or plantation forests) Transpower can help calculate safe and practical planting setback distances. Early planning will avoid the need to fell immature trees and lessen the risk of wind-throw damage and forest fire.

For further advice, or if in doubt, please contact Transpower – 0508 LANDOWNER



Trees should not be able to fall within 4 metres of a transmission line conductor. Keep in mind that the conductor can swing and sag.