

HAZARDS FROM TREES

GENERAL INFORMATION NOTICE GIVEN BY TRANSPOWER IN RELATION TO THE ELECTRICITY (HAZARDS FROM TREES) REGULATIONS 2003

In accordance with regulation 5 of the Electricity (Hazards from trees) regulations 2003, this notice provides information on:

- a general description of the dangers posed by contact between trees and live conductors and on the cutting and trimming of trees in the vicinity of live conductors;
- an explanation of the notice zone and growth limit zone as defined in the Tree Regulations; and
- a list of the offences specified in regulation 26(1) and the penalties that may be imposed on tree owners for committing any of those offences.

DANGERS

Trees growing near transmission lines are a potential hazard to humans and animals, as well as being a threat to the security and reliability of the electricity supply system. If trees touch high voltage conductors, or electricity “jumps” the gap to a tree, dangerous voltages may arise in the area on, around or adjacent to the tree. These voltages have the potential to cause serious harm and death. High voltage electricity flowing into trees can also cause trees to ignite. The effect of a tree fire can be very severe in forest areas, as well as threatening human and animal life.

The cutting, trimming or felling of trees near conductors is a very hazardous activity. There is a significant risk to persons carrying out such an activity because of the possibility of contact with the conductors. The cutting, trimming or felling of trees near conductors requires appropriate skills, and the use of specialised safety equipment and procedures. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment has issued an Approved Code of Practice for tree work and a Code on tree maintenance around power lines. These codes should be consulted before carrying out any tree trimming work.

It is also dangerous to build, construct, excavate, or operate mobile plant close to conductors and the support structures. The New Zealand Electrical Code of Practice 34:2001 must be complied with when carrying out activities near conductors

and their support structures. Please contact Transpower via 0508 LANDOWNER or email landowner@transpower.co.nz for further information or assistance with safe distances in relation to cutting, trimming and felling trees and the planting of trees near transmission lines, and when carrying out building or construction activities near conductors and the support structures.

EXPLANATION OF THE ZONES

The growth limit zone is an area around a conductor into which a tree cannot encroach. The growth limit zones vary for different voltages, span lengths, and parts of spans. The Schedule to the Trees Regulations sets out the distances that apply in the different circumstances.

As an example, for Transpower's conductors, on spans less than 150 metres in length, the growth limit zone is 4 metres from the tree and any point on the conductor, taking into account the maximum design sag of the conductor. (The maximum design sag is the potential position of the conductor both vertically and horizontally under worst case conditions).

The notice zone is the space extending not more than 1 metre beyond the growth limit zone. If a tree encroaches into the growth limit zone then Transpower will issue the tree owner a cut or trim notice. The tree must then be cut back so it no longer encroaches into the notice zone. This means, for the example given above that the outer edges of any trees would need to be trimmed to at least 5 metres away from where the conductor could be positioned at maximum design sag or during strong winds or extreme temperatures and so on.

TREE OWNER OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

Regulation 26 sets out the offences and penalties that a tree owner can face under the Trees Regulations. A tree owner who is given a cut or trim notice but fails, without reasonable excuse, to cause the tree to be cut or trimmed, or fails to advise Transpower of the time and location of the cutting or trimming of the tree, commits an offence. The possible penalty for either offence is a fine not exceeding \$10,000, and if the offence continues, a further fine not exceeding \$500 a day for every day or part of a day the offence continues.

NO-INTEREST TREE NOTICES

If a tree owner does not want to maintain an interest in any trees growing close to a Transpower owned line, then they may give a no-interest tree notice to Transpower in accordance with the Tree Regulations. (There are some trees for which a no-interest tree notice cannot be given.) This removes the obligation on the tree owner to cut or trim the tree, and the cost and responsibility falls on Transpower to either trim or remove the tree. Please contact Transpower for further information on giving a no-interest tree notice regarding Transpower owned lines.

Note: For lines not owned by Transpower, please contact the line owner for information on vegetation management and no-interest trees notices.

