

**We recommend tree trimming is undertaken by approved tree-cutting contractors**

## How much needs to be cut from a tree?

To preserve the natural shape and health of a tree, each tree's size, shape and growth rate needs to be taken into consideration during power line clearing. A contractor or arborist will consider each tree individually and consult with you as to how much to cut.

Ideally, trees should be trimmed so that growth stays clear of minimum safe distances between trees and electrical line and other electrical works. These minimum safe distances are set out in the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulation. Copies of this Regulation are available from our website -

[www.nel.co.nz/regulatory-disclosure/trees-and-power-lines/](http://www.nel.co.nz/regulatory-disclosure/trees-and-power-lines/)

Some trees may need to be removed altogether.



The **Growth Limit Zone** is the minimum clear space required to surround the electricity line in all directions as specified in the Regulations. The actual distance (in metres) is determined by the span length, conductor type and voltage of the electricity line.

The **Notice Zone** is the clear space surrounding the electricity line in all directions to which the tree should be trimmed in accordance with the Regulations. The Notice Zone extends not more than one metre beyond the Growth Limit Zone.

## What should I consider when planting near powerlines?

Plant shrubs that will not intrude on power lines in years to come. Consider their 'mature height and spread' to avoid future clearance problems.

A variety of shrubs are suitable for planting near power lines – we recommend you contact your local nursery for advice.

Where trees have been removed, you can stop regrowth or sprouting by applying environmentally-friendly herbicides to the stumps. It may then be possible to plant other 'power line-friendly' shrubs in their place.

**In ALL cases - it is very important to check the mature growth height of trees and shrubs before planting**

## Tree owners liabilities

A tree owner who is given a cut or trim notice relating to a tree and fails to have the tree cut or trimmed, or fails to advise the line owner of the time and location of the cutting or trimming of the tree, commits an offence. The maximum fine is \$10,000 and, if the offence is a continuing one, a further fine will apply of up to \$500 for every day or part of a day during which the offence has continued.

For further information on offences and liabilities of tree owners refer to Regulation 26 of the Electricity (Hazard from Trees) Regulations 2003 available on our website -

[www.nel.co.nz](http://www.nel.co.nz)  
**Nelson Electricity Limited**  
**PO Box 7083, Nelson**  
**Phone 03 546 9256 • Fax 03 546 0487**

Nelson Electricity is a member of the Utilities Disputes scheme which offers a free and independent dispute resolution service for any complaints.



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# Trees & Power Lines

The Responsibilities of Tree Owners and NEL

## **Nelson Electricity (NEL) owns and operates the electricity distribution network in Nelson city and encompasses approximately 9,500 consumers. Our network is rated as one of New Zealand's most reliable.**

Whilst Nelson Electricity has an underground network, many streets still have overhead power lines. Nelson Electricity has produced this brochure to help property owners deal safely with tree trimming near power lines.



## **So what's changed?**

In July 2005, new Regulations came into effect – the Electricity (Hazards from Tree) Regulations 2003. The Regulations:

- Define safe separation distances between trees and overhead lines.
- Specify who is responsible for ensuring clearances are maintained.
- Place potential liability on the tree owner if any damage or accident occurs due to trees touching power lines.

*(Note that the word 'trees' in this brochure includes all types of vegetation, including shrubs).*

## **How do I know if my trees need trimming?**

A common sense approach to tree trimming by tree owners will generally avoid a problem occurring. In deciding whether to trim a tree, Nelson Electricity urges you to be mindful of the following:

- A tree may not touch a power line in fine weather but this can change in bad weather, particularly storms. Branches can sag or break away in strong winds causing serious damage to power lines; and in winter ice/frost may build up creating additional weight on the tree or the power line.
- In severe weather conditions, vegetation can become electrically 'live' and may electrocute anyone coming into contact with it.
- In dry conditions, electrical sparking may cause fires.
- Large trees can be weakened by disease or storm damage and may threaten to fall onto a power line or persons/property below. Sometimes the entire tree has to be removed to eliminate this hazard.

Nelson Electricity's priority in tree trimming is public safety. If you have any concerns regarding trees getting close to power lines, please contact us.

Our aim is to work with tree owners to ensure that safety is maintained and power outages kept to a minimum. We have implemented a tree management programme which involves the constant monitoring, pruning and removal of trees that threaten to come into contact with overhead power lines. Through this programme we work with tree owners to minimize the risk of trees touching power lines.

**If you see a tree touching power lines and sparking or another hazardous tree condition, please contact Nelson Electricity (NEL) immediately on 03 546 9256**

## **How do I get my trees trimmed?**

If you have trees close to power lines, we recognize that the trimming of these trees is not something the public generally has expertise in so we are happy to assist or advise you on this.

- Nelson Electricity can arrange for the trees to be trimmed.
- If you would prefer to arrange your own tree trimming, we recommend you hire professionals with the necessary expertise and safety procedures to competently carry out this work.
- Nelson Electricity can provide you with the contact details for the approved tree-cutting contractors. They will advise you on the best methods to maintain safe clearance distances from power lines.
- By Code of Practice (NZ ECP 34:2001), written permission must be obtained from NEL if works, including the maintenance of trees, are to be carried out within (or have the capacity to fall within) four metres of a power line. Your contractor or arborist can arrange for this written permission.
- Non-expert individuals are only allowed to trim trees near power lines if the trees are far enough away from the power lines. An expert is defined by 'Maintenance of Trees Around Power Lines – The Approved Code of Practice for Safety & Health in Tree Work', which is available from Worksafe New Zealand.
- Trimming trees near power lines can be extremely hazardous and should not be under estimated. Contact with a power line can cause:
  - Injury or death to yourself, family or passers-by
  - Damage to property and other trees
  - Damage to electrical appliances
  - Damage to power supply facilities
  - Damage to third parties

If trees owned by you come into contact with and cause damage to the Nelson Electricity network, including contact during the act of tree trimming, you may be liable for that damage including any damage caused to third parties.