

Tree Trimming Improves Service for All

At Dubois REC we strive to balance maintaining beautiful surroundings and ensuring a reliable power supply by keeping power lines clear in rights of way (ROW). A right of way is the land we use to construct, maintain, replace or repair underground and overhead power lines. Rights of way enable the co-op to provide clearance from trees and other obstructions that could hinder the power line installation, maintenance or operation. ROW areas are typically on public lands or located near a business or home. Regardless, Dubois REC must be able to maintain the power lines above and below the ROW. The overall goal of our vegetation management program is to provide reliable power to our members while maintaining the beauty of our community. Proactive vegetation management benefits co-op members in three tangible ways.

Safety: First and foremost, we care about our members and put their safety and that of our lineworkers above all else. Overgrown vegetation and trees pose a risk to power lines. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose grave danger to families. If children can access those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor like a tree. A proactive approach also diminishes the chances of fallen branches or trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for lineworkers to restore power.

Reliability: Of course, one of the biggest benefits of a smart vegetation management program is reliability. Strategic tree trimming reduces the frequency of downed lines causing power outages. Generally speaking, healthy trees don't fall on power lines, and clear lines don't cause problems. Proactive trimming and pruning keeps lines clear to promote reliability.

We have a detailed vegetation management plan to maximize the efficiency of our operation. This includes trimming trees and clearing vegetation 20 feet on each side of power lines, from earth to sky. (See the ROW diagram on the next page.) We contract with Townsend Tree Service for vegetation management and tree trimming. When the work they do is in the normal scope of our right-of-way clearing program, they will complete the job by cleaning up any debris that has been cut, by running it through a chipper/mulcher taking care to cause the least damage possible to yards with the chipper and other equipment. Larger pieces will be left for the homeowner. Also, if a homeowner calls us to request the removal of a tree that they consider a potential problem, or if a tree is identified as a danger to the electric system, the tree will be cut, but the landowner is responsible for the clean up.

It is important to note that spring storm season in Indiana can create a high demand for tree and limb removal. Our crews work through these situations as efficiently and safely as possible, but sometimes it may take one to two weeks to complete the full clean-up work after a particularly widespread storm.

Affordability: On a final note, as you know, Dubois REC is a non-profit cooperative, and that means we strive to keep our costs in check in order to keep our rates affordable. This extends to our approach to vegetation management. If trees grow too close to power lines, the potential for expensive repairs also increases. Overgrown right-of-way is also harder on our equipment. Effective tree trimming and other vegetation management efforts keep costs down for everyone. If you have any questions about our Right-Of-Way Trimming plan, please contact our office at 812-482-1188.

Thank you,
Joseph Henson
CEO of Dubois REC

