



GRAND RAPIDS
PUBLIC UTILITIES

Service is Our Nature

500 SE Fourth Street • Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744

Section: Electric	Category:
Policy Reference:	Policy Title: Vegetation Management Policy

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Section I – Introduction

This policy was developed to be used as a guide by Grand Rapids Public Utilities (GRPU) personnel, contractors, and customers to provide direction on how vegetation will be managed around GRPU-owned overhead and underground power lines.

1. Definitions

The following terms when used in this Policy have the meanings given below:

Clearance: Proper separation between power lines and any part of a tree.

Customer: Any individual, partnership, association, firm, public or private corporation or governmental agency having GRPU’s electric service at any specified location.

Danger Tree: A tree which is dead, dying, or damaged, or has significant potential to fall over, and if the tree falls it would make contact with an overhead power line that affects more than one GRPU customer.

Electric Service: The conductors and equipment connecting the serving utility, GRPU, to the wiring system of the premises served.

GRPU: Grand Rapids Public Utilities, a municipal utility established under M.S.A. 412.321 – 412.391 providing electric, water and wastewater utility services.

2. Vegetation Management

a. Purpose

One of the most common causes of electrical outages is trees contacting overhead power lines. GRPU strives to maintain proper clearances between trees and overhead power lines to increase electric service reliability to our customers. Clearances are also maintained for customer and personnel safety, as trees contacting electrical lines can cause electrical shock and create the potential for fires.

b. General

Proper clearances are designated in Exhibit A of this policy along with the latest version of the National Electric Safety Code. GRPU personnel, contractors, and customers shall trim or remove vegetation in accordance with Exhibit A, Vegetation Control Specifications for Electrical Distribution Line Right of Ways. Clearances shall be maintained in accordance with Section 4.4 of Exhibit A. Clearances around higher voltages are greater due to increased danger of trees contacting these lines which generally affect more customers if contact is made. Clearances for low voltage power lines are lower due to reduced risk of contact with these lines, which generally do not cause significant outages if contact is made with trees.

c. City of Grand Rapids Aligned Goals and Environmental Stewardship

The City of Grand Rapids has been a designated Tree City USA since 1987 which encourages maintenance and growth of good quality tree cover within urban areas. GRPU aligns themselves with the goals of this program especially if trees are planted or replanted around power lines after tree trimming and removal activities. If trees are replanted in the vicinity of overhead power lines by GRPU, they will be slow growing, shorter trees that are wind resistant.

GRPU will perform regular vegetation trimming versus removal if possible in order to maintain proper tree cover aesthetics. By maintaining clearances in Exhibit A, electric outages can often be minimized without having to completely remove the trees. Consideration will also be given to the type of tree that is trimmed versus removed. Fast growing trees generally cause more issues with power line contacts and are not resistant to higher winds. These trees will be removed if possible to prevent fast regrowth and outages caused by trees.

d. Access

In order to maintain the clearances around power lines, GRPU requires access to their electrical equipment within right of ways, easements, and services feeding individual customers. A minimum of 10 feet of ground clearance along power lines shall be maintained for proper equipment access these areas. Power lines running along roads and alleyways generally serve as this access and no additional clearance is required other than clearance from overhead power lines. GRPU will work with customers to maintain access to GRPU-owned equipment installed on customer property.

e. Danger Trees

Trees that qualify as Danger Trees, as defined in Section 1, shall be removed at the expense of GRPU. Customers may notify GRPU of the presence of a danger tree, or GRPU personnel may also make the same request.

GRPU designated personnel shall inspect each Danger Tree and make the determination of the tree needs to be removed. The tree stump and root ball will not be removed unless it poses a significant safety hazard or is next to a roadway or alleyway.

If the tree does not qualify as a Danger Tree and is on a customer's property, the customer shall be notified it is their responsibility to remove the tree if they want to do so. GRPU will work with the customer to drop or cover up electrical lines to minimize the risk of damage to their property and damage to their electric service should they choose to remove the tree.

f. Customer and Contractor Tree Removal

When customers or contractors choose to remove vegetation that is not the work of GRPU or a GRPU contractor, GRPU personnel will work with the customer or contractor to drop overhead electrical lines or place coverup on these lines if the tree may contact these lines during removal. If there is not significant cost to GRPU, the customer or contractor shall not be charged for this work in order to encourage customers and contractors to work with GRPU while removing the vegetation and to minimize danger of contact with overhead lines.

g. Emergency Tree Trimming and Removal

Vegetation interfering with providing power to customers shall be cleared as quickly as possible and may result in debris being left on site. The removal of the debris will be coordinated as soon as practical following the restoration of power.

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