

Leave the Tree Trimming to Us

By Lori K. Froehlich

You love those beautiful old trees that have been in your yard for generations. Trees are a vital part of any rural or urban setting's quality of life. But when they start growing too close to the power lines, they can knock out the electricity, which is inconvenient and even dangerous.

Remember this planting season that choosing the right tree and the best place to plant will help provide beautiful, healthy trees that need little maintenance. When you are near a power line, plant trees that are less than 25 feet high when mature to reduce the chance of power outages and avoid annual pruning. Remember to locate all underground utilities before planting. Washington state law requires notification at least three days in advance of digging to have all local utilities located free of charge.

Trees and reliable electric service are both important to our community. Unfortunately, the two are not always compatible. Klickitat PUD must trim trees for safety purposes, as required by law, and to avoid service interruptions.

According to the Revised Code of Washington, any time a potential threat exists that could cause damage to electric facilities from trees and vegetation, an electric utility is required to remove the hazard. KPUD's policy further clarifies that any limb within 10 feet of distribution electrical lines and 23 feet of transmission lines will be cut back.

Because proper pruning techniques require cutting at certain points, branches will be cut at a main branching point, or at the trunk, leaving no stub. This could mean the branch is cut more than 10 feet from the lines, but it helps preserve the health of the tree.

The extent of trimming required also is determined by the tree's growth rate, the movement of trees and conductors in adverse weather, and the voltage of the lines. To ensure proper tree trimming and removal, KPUD employs a professional tree-trimming crew that includes a certified arborist, foreman Dale Stelter. Dale helps determine whether a tree is diseased, dead or dying and, depending

on the proximity of the tree to electric facilities, if complete removal is required.

Trees end up causing a majority of the power outages and interruptions that affect KPUD customers. Tree limbs can fall into power lines and cause damage to wires, short circuits and other problems. This creates potential danger for you and your property. This danger can be avoided by not planting tall-growing trees under or near electric wires. It is essential that tree trimming be done properly to ensure safe and dependable electric service, and to provide for the welfare of the trees on your property.

Provision of rights-of-way easements grants KPUD authority to trim trees without property owner permission to provide a safe and reliable electric system. But KPUD respects the property of its customer-owners and in most cases will notify the property owner of the need for tree work before trimming is done. In unusual or emergency situations, it might be necessary to trim trees without first notifying the property owner to restore service or eliminate safety hazards.

Call Klickitat PUD at (509) 773-5891 or (800) 548-8357 if you have trees that are getting dangerously close to power lines. Cutting branches near an overhead line is not for do-it-yourselfers. KPUD crews are trained to work safely around live power lines and know how to preserve the health and beauty of your trees. ■



The Klickitat PUD tree-trimming crew, from left, Foreman Dale Stelter, Apprentice Kirt O'Leary, Journeyman Bobby Koffler and Journeyman Jim Gast.