

Trees, powerlines, and you

A property owner’s guide to maintaining a safe and secure electricity supply



Property owners and electricity distribution (lines) companies have a legal responsibility to ensure the safety and security of electricity supply for people, businesses, and communities.

Trees and vegetation growing too close to powerlines are a key cause of unplanned power outages. That is why the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations are important. It sets out what property owners, and companies like Buller Electricity is obligated to do to keep everyone safe.

Here is what you need to know about your responsibilities.

The dangers of trees near powerlines

If trees or branches come into contact with powerlines it can cause damage, widespread outages, and create risk of serious injury or death.

As a property owner, you are responsible for any trees on your property and could be liable for the significant cost of any damage to powerlines. That is why it's important to check trees or hedges regularly and take appropriate action if they do pose a risk. If you are unsure what to do, contact us for advice.

Trees need to be kept at a safe distance from power equipment because:

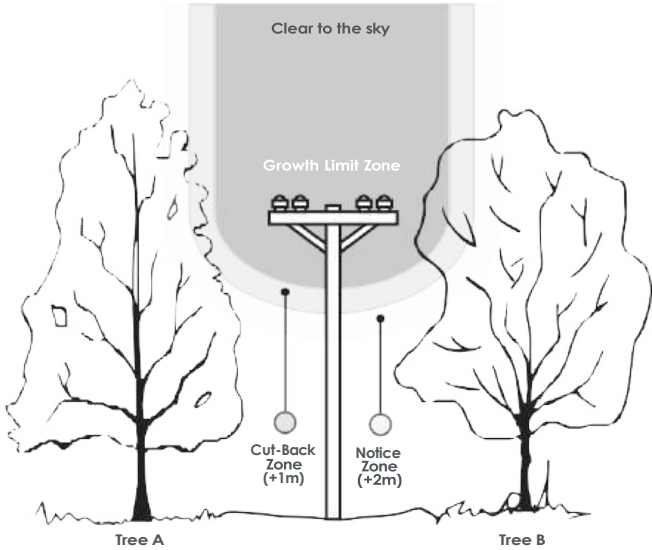
- Children who climb trees close to powerlines are at risk of serious injury or death.
- In severe weather, vegetation can become electrically 'live' and may pose an electrocution risk.
- Trees can fall during bad weather, snow or icy conditions, damaging powerlines and causing outages.
- Trees close to powerlines may cause electrical sparking, resulting in fire.
- Tree roots can grow around underground electricity cables, damaging the insulation and causing power supply failure.

Maintaining a safe distance

In October 2024, the Regulations were updated to increase the minimum safe distances between trees and powerlines, and a new 'clear to the sky' requirement for some trees. There is a grace period relating to these until 16 October 2026.

If your tree is growing within the Cut-back or Notice Zone (Tree A), you may get a legal notice saying your trees must be trimmed soon because they are getting too close to power equipment.

Should they reach the Growth Limit Zone (Tree B), you will get a legal notice requiring them to be trimmed. Check our websites for a list of authorised contractors.



- These distances are from the powerline, not the power pole
- These distances are a minimum and apply in all conditions including high wind or snow
- In most instances the powerlines that go to a house or building are low voltage powerlines
- Powerlines that go down a street may be low or high voltage
- For spans greater than 150 metres additional clearances apply
- Trees protected by district plans are excluded from the 'clear to the sky' requirement

Overhead Line Voltage	Growth Limit Zone	Cut-back Zone	Notice Zone
Powerlines (230-400 V)	0.5m	1.5m	2.5m
High voltage lines (6.6 kV)	1.6m	2.6m	3.6m
High voltage lines (11kV)	1.6m	2.6m	3.6m
High voltage lines (33 kV)*	2.5m	3.5m	4.5m
High voltage lines (50-66 kV)*	3.0m	4.0m	5.0m
High voltage lines (66 kV or more)*	4.0m	5.0m	6.0m

*Clear to the sky requirement

Cutting trees near live lines

Cutting trees near live powerlines can be dangerous and requires specialised skills. We can refer you to a fully qualified and experienced contractor or temporarily disconnect your supply so the trimming can be done safely.

You can trim a tree if it is outside the Growth Limit Zone, but you do need to contact us if you plan on using machinery within 4m of powerlines.

It is important you take the necessary precautions to keep you and others safe.

Cut/Trim notices

Our contractors continually check the network for trees and vegetation that pose a risk to power equipment. You will receive a Cut/Trim Notice if your trees need attention under the Regulations.

You can also declare no interest in your trees near our network. That means you won't be liable for damage the tree causes to the lines, and that we have permission to carry out necessary safety work, including removal.

In most cases, if it's your first Cut/Trim Notice we will pay for it (conditions apply).

Second cut/trim

After that you are responsible for taking care of the trees on your property. This includes organising and paying for an authorised contractor to trim them safely if they are close to power equipment.

Being proactive and inspecting your trees will help ensure the power can stay on for everyone.

Please note that if your trees cause any problems on the electricity network, you may be charged for all repair costs.

Fines

You can be fined up to \$10,000 if you do not comply with written requests to cut/trim your trees or don't tell us the work is taking place. We need a minimum of 3 days' notice.

You can also be fined an additional \$500 for every day this does not happen.

If your trees are deemed an immediate danger to the network, we are obligated to remove the hazard. If you have not kept your trees clear of powerlines or not returned the required paperwork, you will be responsible for all the costs we incur to remove the hazard.

Chat to us

Your experience with us is important. If we have not met your expectations for any reason, please let us know so we can discuss it with you.

If we cannot resolve your concern, you can contact Utilities Disputes Limited – a free and independent resolution service. Visit www.udl.co.nz

For more information about the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations, check out our website or give us a call.



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