

## **Tree Pruning by Duke Energy**

You've returned home from work to find that the shade trees by the street in front of your house had been pruned, and now there is a V-shaped opening in the trees that reveals the overhead electrical lines.

"Why did this happen?" is the first question that gets asked.

The short answer is that tree pruning is a necessary maintenance task Duke performs to keep lines safe and power outages to our homes and businesses to a minimum.

But if you want to know more, below are answers to some of the more frequently asked questions the City gets when Duke crews are in our neighborhoods.

### **Why is Duke doing this?**

Trees are one of the defining assets of a community. They can often be one of the main causes of power outages if the wrong size tree was planted under power lines years ago. Duke Energy works balance aesthetics their responsibility to provide safe, reliable power to Newport households and businesses. Trees that are close to power lines must be routinely and proactively pruned or removed to ensure they don't cause power outages.

### **Is Duke allowed to prune public trees? Does the City know about this work?**

Duke holds a legal easement within the public right-of-way where their utility poles and lines are located. Within this easement, they are allowed to access the lines and equipment to perform maintenance and repairs. And, national regulations require Duke to maintain minimum clearances away from energized lines from tree limbs. The City is aware of Duke's work and requirements, and discusses the plan of work and trees involved each time they are in Newport.

### **Who are the companies Duke hires to do this? Are they qualified?**

Duke has hired Asplundh to handle the work in Newport. They have certified arborists on crews and meet national arboricultural and safety requirements needed to work around energized lines on our public streets.

### **They cut branches so now there is a "V" or "L" in my street tree! How can this be OK? What can I do?**

While the methods used by Duke and its contractors are approved methods, it can be jarring to see your street tree pruned this way. Many look at this and comment that this can't be what someone should willingly do to tree. However, the reality is that at some point in the past a large shade tree was planted under a power line. Duke is dedicated to keeping these lines safe and reliable, so limbs must be pruned so there is at least 10 feet of clearance and no overhanging branches near the lines that provide the electricity to our homes, businesses, and emergency response facilities.

The technique of "directional pruning" (see diagrams at right) was developed by the Tree Care Industry Association, approved by the American National Standard Institute (ANSI), adopted by the arboriculture

NOTE: Duke Energy is scheduled to prune tree branches away from overhead power lines in the East Row neighborhood starting in February and continuing through the spring of 2020.

industry as its standard, and is endorsed by the Arbor Day Foundation and the International Society of Arboriculture.

The important part of this work to get right is to ensure each cut is made in just the right place so no stubs or large wounds are created. That's why it appears Duke's crews are removing more branches than necessary. For the tree's overall health and for public safety, tree limbs need to be pruned back to where the right spot is, which is often further than 10 feet away from the wires.

### What can we do to reduce this work in the future?

Ultimately, the only solution is getting the "right tree in the right place." In Newport, the community has been working hard to correct this issue, but will take time. The 700+ trees that have planted by community groups over the last 5 years have all been done with the right species --- small trees under power lines, large trees where no lines are present. This means drastic pruning in future years will be avoided.

Over the coming years, as trees naturally begin to decline or cause safety issues in Newport, the large trees under utility lines will be replaced with the appropriate sized tree, and this regular utility line pruning will be needed less and less. That is our ultimate goal.

### Can we bury power lines underground in the future?

Underground lines are possible, but are only practical in new construction and development situations. It is extremely expensive to "retrofit" a street by placing the lines underground. But more importantly, the extensive excavation that would be needed to bury the lines would severely damage our street trees in the process.

Do you have more questions? For more information, you can call Duke Energy at 866.216.2136.

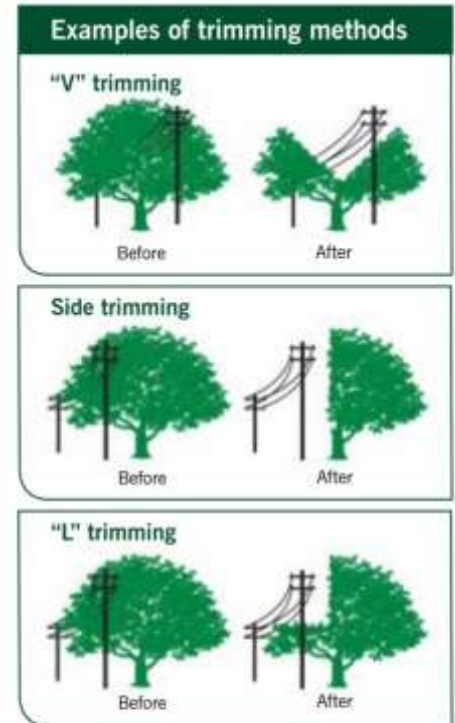
Or, view these websites:

<https://www.duke-energy.com/community/trees-and-rights-of-way/faq>

<https://www.duke-energy.com/community/trees-and-rights-of-way/how-we-manage-trees/pruning-techniques>

<https://extension.psu.edu/pruning-for-utility-line-clearance>

<https://www.gotouaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/UtilityPruningTrees.pdf>



Directional pruning involves cutting a limb back to another limb (or lateral) so that future growth of the resulting limb is directed away from the power lines. The basis for this type of pruning is that each limb removed from a tree is removed either where it joins another limb or at the trunk. With directional pruning, tree growth causes less impact to public safety and electrical service. This procedure is different from the philosophy of "rounding" trees over in which limbs are cut at arbitrary points, normally leaving unhealthy "stub" cuts, which can damage the tree.