

Trees, power lines, and you

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



Network Tasman owns and operates the electricity distribution network in the Nelson Tasman area, which involves looking after the power poles and lines that carry electricity from the National Grid to over 43,000 connections across the region.

A crucial part of this responsibility is the ongoing management of trees and vegetation near power lines as they are a common cause of unplanned power outages.

Both property owners and electricity distribution companies, like Network Tasman, have a legal responsibility to ensure the safety and security of electricity supply for people, businesses and communities.

That's why the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations are important as they set out what the responsibilities are for property owners and electricity distributors.

Here's what you need to know about your responsibilities...

The danger of trees near power lines

Trees and branches can damage power lines, cause widespread outages and create risk of serious injury.

As a property owner, you are responsible for the trees on your property and if they cause damage to power lines you could be liable for the significant cost of repairs. That's why it's important for you to check your trees, hedges and other vegetation regularly and maintain them to make sure they don't grow too close to the lines. If you're unsure what to do, contact us for advice.

IF YOU SEE A TREE OR BRANCH THAT HAS FALLEN ONTO THE POWER LINES DO NOT APPROACH IT.

PHONE 0800 508 100 IMMEDIATELY.

Why do trees need to be kept at a safe distance from power lines?

- ⚡ Bad weather can damage trees and branches causing them to fall onto lines, potentially damaging the lines and causing power outages.
- ⚡ Diseased and damaged trees that are close to power lines are at risk of falling onto the lines.
- ⚡ Fire risk – trees too close to power lines can cause electrical sparking which can start fires.
- ⚡ Electric shock – you can get a severe electric shock from a tree touching a power line or from cutting a tree close to a power line.
- ⚡ Children climbing trees close to power lines could accidentally come into contact with live lines causing serious injury or death.

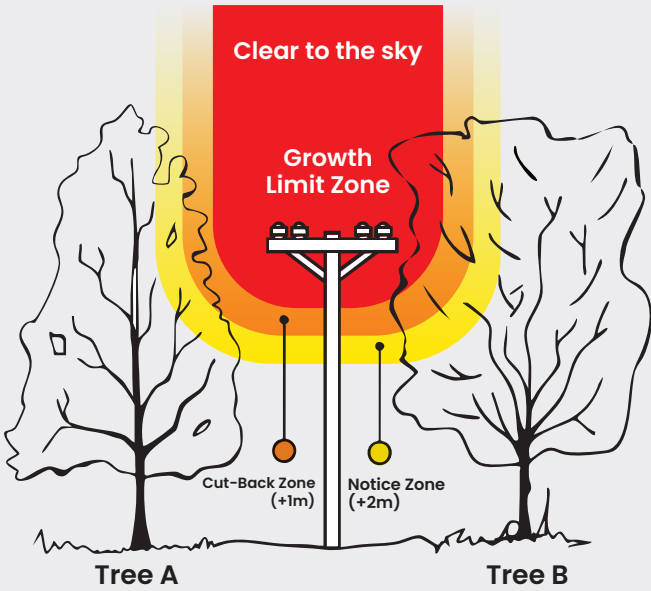
Maintaining a Safe Distance

In October 2024, the Regulations were updated to include a new 'Clear to the sky requirement' to prevent trees overhanging high voltage lines. This requirement applies to power lines of 22,000 volts and above and also to all voltages of power lines where the span between two poles is longer than 150 metres. We will gradually introduce this requirement as we routinely survey our network of lines (there is a grace period until October 2026). **The diagram below shows the updated requirements.**

Tree A – If your tree is growing within the Cut-back or Notice Zone (Tree A), you may get a notice saying your trees should be trimmed soon because they're getting close to power lines/equipment.

Tree B – If your tree grows into the Growth Limit Zone it is TOO CLOSE to power lines/equipment and needs immediate attention. The tree must be cut back to ensure it is outside the Cut-back zone. Only utility arborists qualified to work close to live power lines can cut trees that have grown into the Growth Limit Zone.

Overhead Line Voltage	Growth Limit Zone	Cut-back Zone	Notice Zone
Low voltage (230–400 Volts)	0.5m	1.5m	2.5m
High voltage (11kV/11,000 Volts)	1.6m	2.6m	3.6m
*High voltage (33kV/33,000 Volts)	2.5m	3.5m	4.5m
*High voltage (66kV/66,000 Volts)	4.0m	5.0m	6.0m
*Clear to the sky requirements			



1. These distances are from the power line, not the power pole
2. These distances are a minimum and apply in all conditions including strong winds or snow
3. In most instances the power lines that go to a house or building are low voltage power lines
4. Power lines that go down a street may be low or high voltage
5. For spans greater than 150 metres additional clearances apply
6. Trees protected by district plans are excluded from the 'clear to sky' requirement

Cutting trees near live lines

Cutting trees near live power lines is dangerous and requires specialised skills. Trees that have grown inside the Growth Limit Zone must only be cut by a fully qualified contractor that is approved by Network Tasman. See our website for approved contractors.

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

It's important you take the necessary precautions to keep yourself and others safe.

Cut/Trim Notices

Our surveyors routinely check the network for trees and vegetation that pose a risk to our power lines and equipment. You'll receive a legal notice called a Cut/Trim Notice if your trees need attention under the Regulations.

If it is the first time a Cut/Trim notice has been issued for that tree, a free trim will be offered. Alternatively, if you decide you have no interest in keeping the tree, you can accept the free fell option (conditions apply).

Second Cut/Trim

After that you're responsible for making sure your trees don't grow close to the power lines again. If they do, it is your responsibility to organise and pay for a Network Tasman approved tree contractor to trim the trees to a safe clearance (see our website).

Being proactive and regularly 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 the full cost of repairs.

Fines

You can be fined up to \$10,000 if you don't comply with written requests to cut/trim your trees.

You can also be fined an additional \$500 for every day you don't comply.

If your trees are deemed an immediate danger to our network, we're obligated to remove the hazard. If you haven't kept your trees clear of power lines or have not returned the required paperwork, you'll be responsible for all the costs we incur to remove the hazard.

Chat to us

For more information about the Electricity (Hazard from Trees) Regulations and managing trees/vegetation near power lines, check out our website www.networktasman.co.nz/trees or contact our Tree/Vegetation Department
Freephone: 0800 508098 Email: trees@networktasman.co.nz

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Your consumer-owned electricity distributor