

# Trees and low voltage power lines

## Frequently asked questions

### **Why do lines companies need to prune trees?**

Trees have to be pruned to keep branches and other vegetation from interfering with our electric lines and equipment.

When tree branches contact a power line, they can cause an electric service interruption or a power outage, and also they can create a very dangerous situation. Vegetation can become electrically live, children can climb trees and touch power lines, fires can be started etc. This is why trees must be kept clear of power lines.

### **Who is responsible for the trimming of trees near power lines on private property?**

Orion, as a lines company is responsible for the first cut. After this the land owner/occupier is responsible.

### **Am I, as the land owner, allowed to cut the trees around the lines?**

We recommend you hire professionals with the necessary expertise and safety procedures to competently carry out this work. The cutting of trees near power lines is dangerous and not to be underestimated. Orion is happy to assist or advise you on the hire of professional arborists.

For more information about working with qualified tree professionals and to obtain an up-to-date list of independent tree care contractors in your area, please call our contact centre on 03 363 9898.

### **Can Orion force me to cut my trees?**

In accordance with the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003 there is a formal notification process. Where vegetation affects power lines, Orion may require the tree(s) to be trimmed.

### **What does it mean if I receive a cut/trim vegetation notice from Orion?**

Receipt of this notice means you are required to trim or remove the tree(s) to maintain a minimum clearance from the electricity network, as specified in that notice.

### **The cut/trim vegetation notice says that Orion will carry out the first trim free of charge. What happens from then on?**

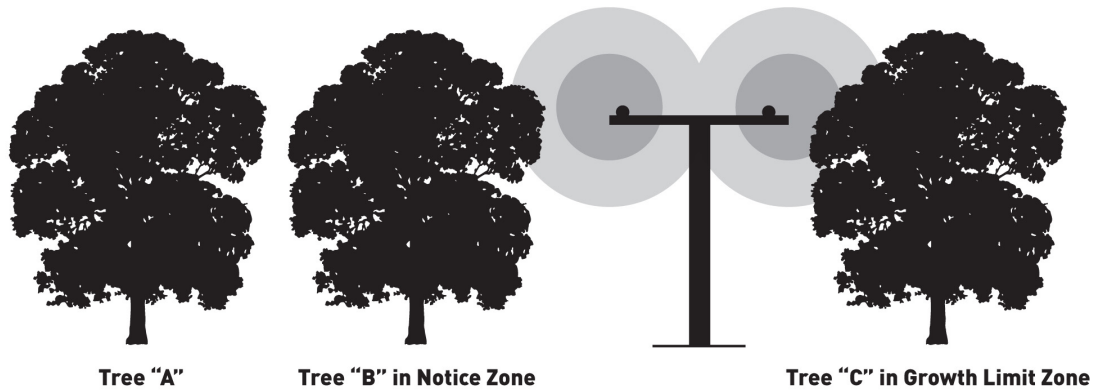
After the first cut it is the tree owner's responsibility to maintain the tree(s) to minimum clearances from the electricity network at the tree owner's expense.

### **I don't want my trees trimmed as it will make them look unsightly and destroy the shape of the tree.**

Orion uses qualified arborists to perform all tree work. There needs to be a clear passage between the electricity network and the tree(s). Removal and re-planting with a more appropriate specimen may be an alternative. Please discuss this issue with the arborist.

### How much will be cut from my trees?

The Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003 establishes clear guidelines as to how far the tree must be away from the power line (refer diagram below). The amount of pruning required varies.



Overhead line	Notice Zone	Growth Limit Zone	Note: 1) These distances are from the power line, not the power pole 2) These distances are a minimum and apply in all conditions including high wind or snow 3) In most instances the power lines that go to a house or building are low voltage power lines. Power lines that go down a street may be low or high voltage.
<b>33kV (High voltage)</b>	<b>3.5 metres</b>	<b>2.5 metres</b>	
<b>11kV (High voltage)</b>	<b>2.6 metres</b>	<b>1.6 metres</b>	
<b>400V/230V (Low voltage)</b>	<b>1.5 metres</b>	<b>0.5 metres</b>	

Our contractors are trained to look at and consider such things as tree species, tree growth rate, tree health, the relative location to the power lines, and the type of electric facility involved, before pruning and importantly how often you want the job to be done (remember that Orion only pays for the first trim).

Arborists may remove entire branches that are growing towards the lines, and branches that, when cut, would re-sprout and grow towards the lines. Branches growing away from power lines are usually not trimmed.

### Is pruning healthy for the tree?

Any time a tree is wounded, the tree is placed under stress. Orion has approved contractors who utilise techniques which are encouraged by the New Zealand Arboricultural Association Inc. (NZAA) and do not interfere with the tree's ability to seal wounds. This allows the trees natural defence system to discourage pests and decay.

### Will they shape my tree?

No. The contractors are directed to prune for clearance around electric power lines only. They will attempt to directionally prune branches to redirect future growth away from power lines.

**Who is responsible for cleaning up the debris and will there be a cost to me?**

Orion will clear debris after the first cut and thereafter all debris remains the responsibility of the tree owner/land owner.

If a tree owner is required to have a tree cut or trimmed, the tree owner must remove or tidy any resulting debris in such a way that it does not affect the use or enjoyment of any adjoining land by its owner or occupier.

Orion will remove debris caused by any cutting or trimming that we undertake. If the landowner would like some debris to be left (eg. felled trees for firewood) this can be negotiated.

**Who is responsible for the trimming of trees near power lines on street road reserves?**

The local authority – Christchurch City Council or Selwyn District Council.

**My lines run through my neighbour's property and are tangled in his/her trees. What can be done?**

Contact Orion and they will inspect the tree(s) to determine who is responsible for the trimming of the trees.

**My neighbours won't cut their trees. Can Orion make them?**

Yes, once Orion is notified an assessment will be made and then the most appropriate course of action undertaken.

**Every time the wind blows the lines are pulled by the trees and I'm worried the lines will break or fall down. Will Orion trim them?**

Once Orion is notified an assessment will be made and then the most appropriate course of action will be undertaken.

**I have a protected tree – is Orion allowed to trim it?**

Yes, under certain circumstances. For further information, contact your local authority – Tony Armstrong at the Christchurch City Council, or Mike Kwant at the Selwyn District Council.

**Nowhere in the legislation does it state that I am unable to plant trees or shelterbelts near power lines but I understand that Orion will trim them anyway?**

You can manage your property any way you wish, however you will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of any trees you plant adjacent to an electricity network, as per the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003.