

Keeping trees away from power lines

A guide to the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations

Trees growing too close to power cables can cause power outages and also create dangers to people.

Keeping trees away from power protects our power supplies and keeps us all safe.

As a property owner, you have responsibilities for ensuring that trees growing on your property are kept clear of both overhead lines and underground cables.

These responsibilities are set out in the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003. The regulations:

- (a) Prescribe safe distances between power lines and trees (Growth Limit Zone, Cut Back Zone, and Notice Zone);
- (b) Establish rules for who is responsible for cutting and trimming trees;
- (c) Set out the penalties that parties may face for failing to comply with the Regulations and;
- (d) Outline the process for handling disputes between tree owners and the electricity line owner.

The Regulations apply to tree growth both above and below ground – i.e. both branches and roots.

Your responsibilities

Property owners are usually responsible for organising approved professionals to trim trees that get too close to power cables. However, after we give notice of a tree that is too close to a power cable, we will cover the cost for the first cut or trim. Further, if the tree owner declares no interest in the tree, we will cover any future costs associated with maintaining that tree to ensure it is a safe distance from our power cable. A no interest declaration can be made if the tree was naturally sown or planted where the tree owner could not have known that it would grow near the lines. This declaration must be made to us within 10 working days of receiving a first cut or trim notice. The form for making a no interest declaration will be included with the first cut or trim notice and can be found on our website [here](#)

What are the different zones?

The Regulations contain three zones relating to tree growth near power cables:

- (a) The growth limit zone;
- (b) The cut back zone; and
- (c) The notice zone.

The growth limit zone is the minimum safe distance between trees and power lines. For above ground power lines, this distance changes depending on the voltage of the line. For the insulated below ground cables being installed for the Tauhei project the growth limit zone will be 0.5 metres.

The cut back zone is the area in which the trees need to be cut back, and is no larger than 1 metre beyond the growth limit zone. This means that for the insulated below ground cables being installed for the Tauhei solar farm project, the cut back zone for tree roots is 1.5 metres.

The notice zone is no larger than 2 metres beyond the growth limit zone – owners of trees within this zone will receive a notice from electricity works owners. When a tree is in the notice zone and the tree owner has not issued a “no interest declaration”, we may issue a hazard warning notice to let the tree owner know that their tree must not encroach in the growth limit zone.

What you need to know

Trimming and feeling trees around power lines is dangerous and could result in injury or death.

Only qualified utility arborists can trim trees that are within 4 meters of a power cable.

This means that if any part of a tree is within 4 metres of a power line or underground power cable you will need contact a professional arborist to complete any necessary trimming on that tree.

We are constructing a high voltage underground cable along Mikkelsen Road to the Transpower’s Waihou Substation. If you may have trees that need to be trimmed back during trenching works and in the ongoing maintenance of the cable we will contact you so that we can ensure your safety and compliance with the Regulations.

Offences by tree owners

The Regulations set out the following offences that may be committed by tree owners:

- (a) Failing to cut or trim a tree after receipt of a cut and trim notice; and
- (b) Failing to advise a works owner of the time and location of the cutting and trimming of a tree.

We note that exemptions apply if you have applied for a dispensation and are awaiting a decision on that dispensation, or the decision has been referred to an arbitrator.

These offences carry penalties of fines up to \$10,000, including further penalties for continuing offences.

The Regulations can be read in full [here](#).