



VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Guide to treatment methods

Prune or trim

Pruning or trimming involves the selective cutting of branches, limbs and other vegetation to maintain safe, reliable clearance around power lines. This work is performed by qualified utility arborists using ground- and aerial-based techniques and tools to remove limbs that could grow into, fall onto or otherwise threaten electricity infrastructure.



'V' Trimming: Completed when a tree is planted directly underneath the power line. The systematic removal of inner canopy limbs and branches to promote directional growth away from the conductors in a 'V'-like shape.



'L' trimming: Completed when a tree has grown adjacent to the power line. The systematic removal of branches and limbs on the line side tree canopy from under, beside and above the conductor. Similar to side trimming, but with the ability to leave lower branches and limbs to grow without impeding clearance and safety requirements.



Side trimming: Completed when a tree is planted adjacent to the power line. The systematic removal of branches and limbs on the line side tree canopy from under, beside and above the conductor. This pruning technique can be utilized in place of a full tree removal when all criteria are met.



Top trimming: Completed when a tree is planted directly underneath the power line. The removal of the upper canopy limbs and branches to ensure clearance to conductors. Although this is not a common or accepted pruning practice, it is a pruning technique used in utility vegetation management when tree removals are not approved.

Prune or trim (continued)

All branches and debris accessible to our cleanup equipment will be chipped and blown into a box truck or back into the right-of-way. The work area will be raked of small debris and disposed of.

Any large limbs or trunk material will be cut into lengths and left near the tree base or along the edge of the right-of-way.



Hand slashing or removals

Hand slashing involves the selective, ground-level cutting of non-compatible vegetation using chainsaws, brush cutters or other handheld tools. We target tree species that would otherwise grow into power lines while allowing compatible vegetation to remain for a more natural, sustainable right-of-way.

Full tree removals, by contrast, permanently eliminate trees that pose ongoing hazards or cannot be managed through trimming or selective slashing. It helps ensure the long-term protection of energized equipment and reduces risk of outages or electricity contact incidents.

Hand slashing and removals generally target vegetation below and beside the power line. FortisAlberta will at times also utilize 'Slash Widening' to reestablish right-of-way clearances.

What to expect

Branches and debris accessible to our cleanup equipment will be chipped and blown into a box truck, or back into the right-of-way.

Should the work area not be accessible to equipment, branches, limbs and the main tree trunk may be either piled off the right-of-way or dispersed and cut into pieces to lay flat and decay on the forest floor. The work area will be raked of small debris.

Any large limbs or trunk material will be cut into lengths and left near the tree base or along the edge of the right-of-way. Lengths are determined by the size of the tree trunk.



Mow or mulch

Mow and mulching are mechanical treatments used to keep power line corridors safe and accessible by removing tall-growing vegetation before it can threaten electricity infrastructure.

Mowing uses specialized equipment (skid steers, excavators, tractors, or purpose-built carriers) to cut and grind brush and trees to ground level, making it particularly effective where herbicide use is limited or vegetation is too tall to spray.

Mulching similarly reduces all vegetation within the right-of-way, leaving chipped debris on site (larger sized mulch shreds), which helps control regrowth and eliminates the need to haul material away.

These treatments create a level, low-vegetation corridor that improves long-term line security, supports system reliability and reduces future maintenance needs if paired with a follow-up herbicide application.

What to expect

Cleanup varies based on equipment, terrain, seasonal timing, tree species and density.

Trees taller than the power line are hand-slashed for safety. Branches and limbs are piled for cleanup. The lower portion of the main trunk is cut into lengths and left of the side of the right-of-way.

Mowers and mulchers will make multiple passes over the vegetation piles. We do our best not to strip the soil surface. The right-of-way is left with a mix of shredded and partially-shredded woody debris.

The mulched debris will decompose over time allowing native vegetation to return. Please be aware that non-compatible vegetation will return to the area if not treated with herbicides.

Danger tree removal

Danger tree removal focuses on identifying and safely removing trees located outside the cleared right-of-way that pose a risk of contacting power lines due to defects, decay or structural instability.

Danger trees are specifically evaluated for strike distance, meaning the tree is tall enough and close enough to hit energized conductors if it fails.

Trees that meet these criteria but have more impact on structures or obstacles that are not power line equipment will be considered the property owner's responsibility. Danger tree removals are completed by various crew and equipment types.

What to expect

Danger trees located in a brush or forested area will be removed by falling the tree(s) back into the brush or forested area.

The canopy and branches will be delimbed and cut flat to decay on the forest floor.

The tree trunk will be cut into manageable sized lengths, generally between six and eight feet.

Questions? Call **310-WIRE (9473)**

Herbicide

Herbicide (or 'spray') treatments involve the controlled and selective application of approved chemical products to manage incompatible vegetation. They target specific species that can grow into power lines or power line equipment, helping maintain safe clearances while supporting sustainable, low-growing plant communities.

Applications follow strict federal and provincial regulations, use only licensed personnel, and employ methods such as foliar, basal or cut-surface treatments to ensure precision, minimize environmental impact and reduce the need for repeated mechanical clearing.

What to expect

Decomposition time depends on factors including species, date/time and weather.

Usually the sprayed vegetation will remain standing dead and look unsightly for the first 1-2 seasons until wind and snowpack knock them down.

Grass in the sprayed area may turn yellow for a period of time, but the chemicals we use should not impact these grasses long-term.



General cleanup notes

Our crews do their best to clean up work sites. There are times when debris will be missed or fall from the trimmed trees after the work is completed. Property owners can help support our program by collecting and disposing of this debris on their own.

Removed vegetation will have stumps cut low and flat. Our crews do their best to ensure stumps are no higher than four inches. We do not stump grind.

We retain the right to not cut firewood on removal and danger trees. Tree trunks that are not chipped will be cut into manageable lengths and left on the edge of the right-of-way. Lengths are usually between 4-8 feet.



Vegetation management completed by our Power Line Technicians outside of regular maintenance timeframes is done to ensure safety and reliability for the distribution system. These individuals do not have the equipment or means to clean up and haul away tree debris. Trimmed or removed trees and branches will be piled at the base of the work area for subsequent property owner disposal.

In an emergency or storm

Severe weather can cause trees and branches to fall onto power lines, resulting in power outages.

During storm response, our crews focus on restoring electricity safely and quickly. This work may require trimming or removing trees and branches, including those located on private property, when they interfere with utility equipment.

Our efforts are limited to what is necessary to restore service. Once power has been restored, any remaining tree debris is the responsibility of the property owner.

As emergency tree work prioritizes safety and timely restoration, homeowners may have limited input on appearance or other aesthetic considerations.



Additional information

FortisAlberta contracts various Utility Vegetation Management vendors who supply different crew and equipment makeups.

We rely on our skilled vendors to perform the prescribed work activities using qualified skill sets and equipment. Therefore, a property owner may or will see multiple crews attend their property on varying dates and times.

Our general Utility Vegetation Management crew complements are:

- Aerial Trim Crews
- Slash, Removal, and Danger Tree Crews
- Mow/Mulching Crews
- Herbicide Crews

Questions? Call 310-WIRE (9473)