

630 E Hopkins

San Marcos, TX 78666



The City of San Marcos Electric Utility (SMEU) is committed to maintaining its infrastructure in a manner that helps ensure the safety of its customers, community and employees. Part of that commitment is to our urban forest. We understand the importance of trees to the well-being of our city. We value the shade and beauty of trees. They have an enormous dollar value benefit for everyone living in San Marcos by controlling erosion and storm water, lowering air conditioning costs, and providing wildlife shelter. However, trees that interfere with power lines can cause power outages that interrupt service. This can create potential danger for you and your property. But that danger can be avoided by not planting tall-growing trees under or near electric lines and by routine tree trimming. SMEU hires only tree trimming contractors with a Certified Arborist on staff. The following are answers to the most commonly asked questions concerning SMEU tree trimming policy as it relates to power line clearances.



- **Safety**

Overgrown trees or limbs near power lines can pose a serious danger to unsuspecting children or adults who could come in contact with a live power line while climbing a tree. Appropriate vegetation clearance on the power lines allows for much safer access by personnel during any restoration effort. By maintaining this clearance, we can restore customer power much more safely and efficiently. Power lines can carry up to 14400 volts and can be deadly. Never touch an electrical wire; always assume it is conducting electricity and is dangerous. If you are planning to trim or remove a tree near any power or service line, please contact us at XXX-XXX-XXXX or via the ["Contact Us"](#) page of this Web site. Trained personnel can identify potential reliability or safety threats and advise you what can be done.

- **Reliability**

Storms and high winds are the leading cause of power outages. Trees that are too close to power lines can interrupt electric service, damage our infrastructure, and create dangerous situations when the lines go down. A single tree-to-wire contact may interrupt electric service to hundreds of homes and businesses. If electric service is lost to medical facilities, water systems, traffic lights, or emergency service providers, the results can seriously impact the community. One of the best ways to reduce interruption to electric service is by maintaining adequate clearance between power lines and trees by trimming or removing trees that are too close to the power lines. SMEU or its contractors only performs the work needed to maintain reliable electric service.

• Tree Trimming

We appreciate the environmental benefits and natural beauty of trees as much as our customers do. We trim trees only when necessary, and we go to extra effort to preserve the health of the trees to the degree possible. To do this, we and our contractors follow specifications developed by the **International Society of Arboriculture** and industry-consensus standard known as **ANSI A300**. This standard, created in accordance with the American National Standards Institute, is often used to direct future tree growth away from power lines by trimming limbs that are growing toward the wire while leaving the remaining limbs. This standard was created through a consensus of representatives from the residential and commercial tree care industry, the utility, municipal and federal sectors, the landscape and nursery industries and other interested organizations. SMEU and its tree trimming contractors follows these guidelines.

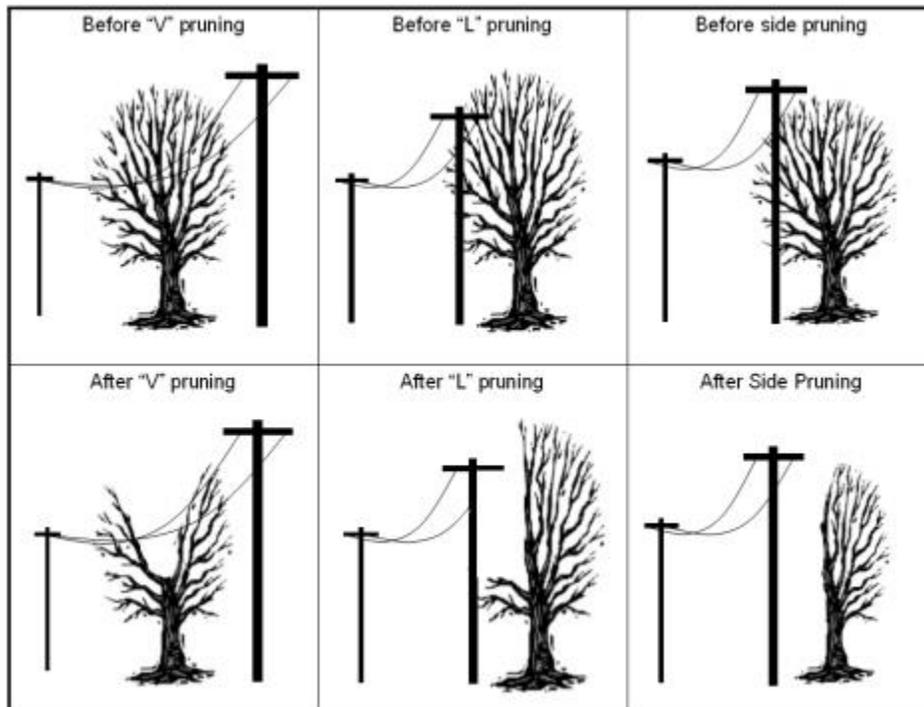
Except in emergency situations, in order to reduce the possibility of spread of the oak wilt fungus we do not trim oak trees between February 1 and July 1 as recommended by the TX forest service Oak Wilt guidelines.

We sterilize our pruning tools between oak trees and immediately paint all wounds on oak trees.

See: <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=1648>

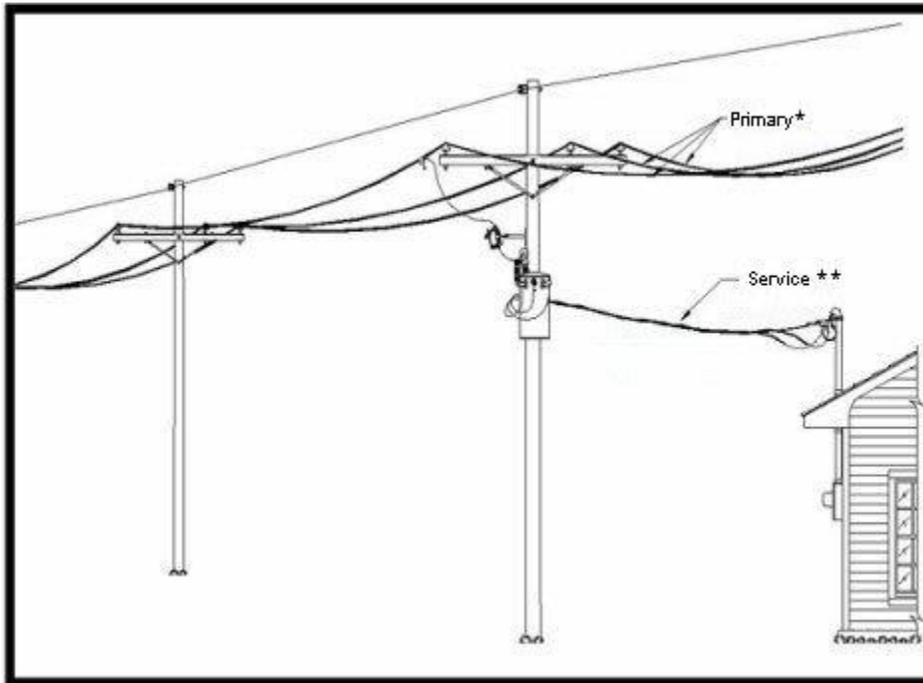
Prior to tree trimming in your area, we place door knockers. This courtesy message lets you know we will begin tree trimming work in your area within the next few weeks. It is not necessary that you be home on the day of the trimming; contractors will proceed with trimming and cleanup.

The three most common methods of pruning are V, L and side:



- **What We Trim**

Power Lines: SMEU routinely maintains the vegetation along our primary lines* (pole to pole) and service lines** (pole to house) ensuring appropriate clearance on the power lines for safety, reliability and tree health. Generally, the utility plans to trim 10' clear space on primary lines.



- **What We Do Not Trim**

Cable and Telephone Lines: We do not trim around cable or telephone lines. These lines are always attached directly to the pole at lower heights and have black plastic coatings. Please contact your cable or telephone company if you are concerned about trees contacting these lines.

- **Customer Requests**

If you see a tree or branch that looks dangerously close to the power lines (pole-to-pole), you can call **XXX-XXX-XXX** and report it. A representative of SMEU will assess the situation and will advise the customer and the tree trimming contractor on what needs to be done.

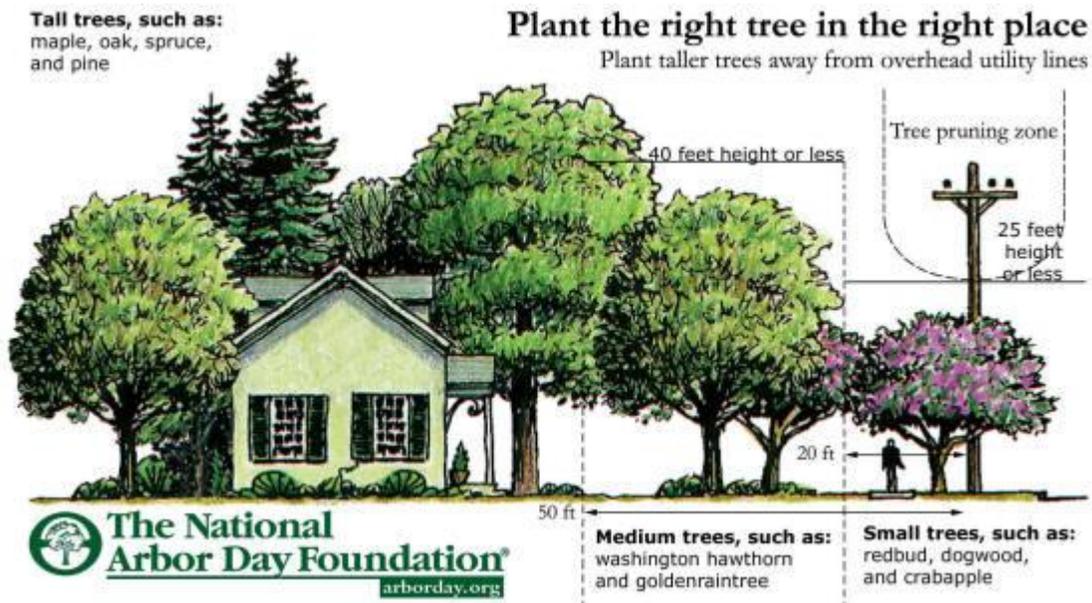
- **Permission of Property Owner**

Provisions of right-of-way dedications and easement documents grant SMEU the authority to trim trees. Separate permission from individual private property owners is not required to provide for a safe and reliable electric system.

However, SMEU respects the property of its customer-owners and will notify the property owner of the need for tree work before trimming is done. In unusual or emergency situations, it may be necessary to trim trees without first notifying the property owner in order to restore service or eliminate safety hazards. SMEU sometimes recommends the removal of trees that are severely split in storms or will require extensive trimming which will affect the life span of the tree. However, in these cases, the trees will not be removed without the property owner's permission.

- **Planting Trees**

The [National Arbor Day Foundation](http://www.arborday.org) encourages thoughtful practices that help preserve community trees while also serving a utility company's customers.



This drawing demonstrates effective planting, placing the right tree in the right place. Trees properly placed can lower line clearance costs for utility companies, reduce tree mortality, and result in healthier community forests. Trees can add value to your home, help cool your home and neighborhood break the cold winds to lower your heating costs, and provide food for wildlife. When planting near utility lines, consider a 25 foot maximum mature height and 20 foot spread.

- **Tree Facts:**

A tree can grow to manufacture five pounds of pure oxygen per day, consume carbon dioxide to fight the "greenhouse effect" that threatens our survival, and provide the cooling equivalent of ten room-size air conditioning units.

A tree, over a 50-year period, will generate \$31,250 worth of oxygen, provide \$62,000 worth of air pollution control, and recycle \$37,500 worth of water.

Trees conserve energy, reduce soil erosion, clean the air we breathe, and help protect rivers and streams. If trees are to provide all these benefits, we need to care for the trees we have, and to plant more.

For more information on trees, including punning and planting guides, go to the [National Arbor Day Foundation website](#). If you are planning to plant new trees near power lines, we would like to help you select the right tree and location. Please call XXX-XXX-XXXX