

[San Marcos, Texas, Code of Ordinances, § 86.191–86.192](#)

DIVISION 7. - ELECTRIC UTILITY RIGHT-OF-WAY (ROW) CLEARANCE

Sec. 86.191. - Maintaining electrical clearances.

San Marcos Electric Utility crews or contract crews shall be allowed access to all primary voltage overhead and underground electric utility infrastructure to remove encroaching vegetation in order to maintain safe operational clearances. Electric utility customer responsibilities to convey right-of-way, and provide unobstructed access are defined in the City of San Marcos Electric Rules and Regulations (see section 86.176).

(Ord. No. [2018-04](#), § 33, 4-17-18)

Sec. 86.192. - Electric utility tree trimming policy.



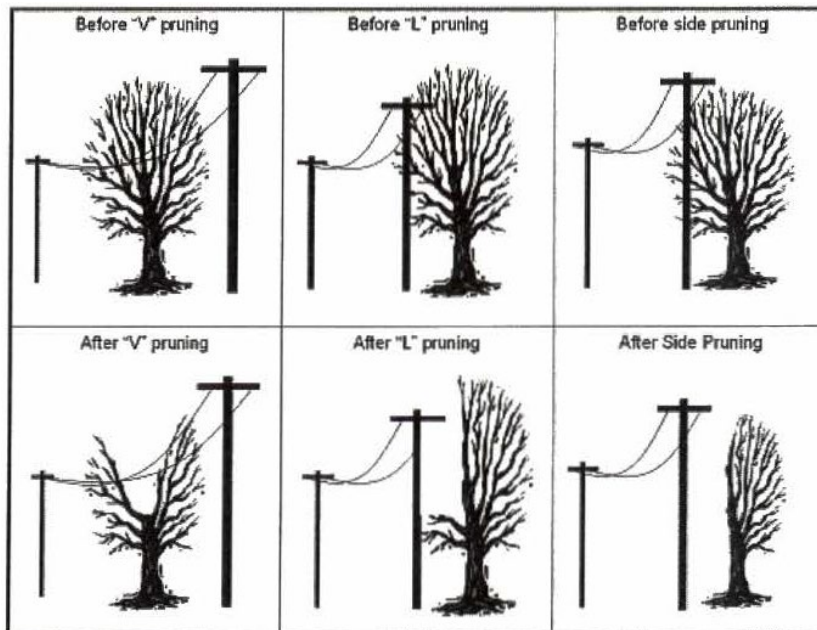
The City of San Marcos Electric Utility (SMEU) is committed to maintaining its infrastructure in a manner that helps ensure the safety of its customers, community and employees. Part of that commitment is to our urban forest. We understand the importance of trees to the well-being of our city. We value 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. The following are answers to the most commonly asked questions concerning SMEU tree trimming policy.

- (1) **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 the San Marcos Electric Utility. Trained personnel can identify potential reliability or safety threats and advise you what can be done.
- (2) **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 performs only the work needed to maintain reliable electric service.

(3) *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 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.

- a. 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.
- b. We sterilize our pruning tools between oak trees and immediately paint all wounds on oak trees.
- c. See <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=1648>
- d. 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.
- e. The three most common methods of pruning are: V, L and side.

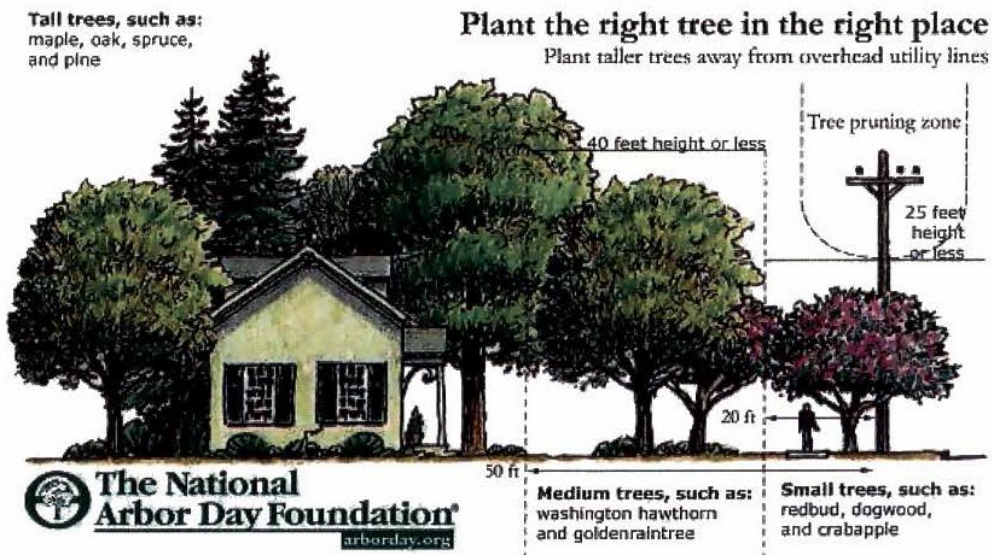


- f. What we trim. *Power Lines: SMEU routinely maintains the vegetation along our primary lines* (pole to pole). Generally, the utility plans to trim 10' clear space on primary lines.
- g. What we do not trim. Cable and Telephone Lines: We do not trim around cable or telephone lines. These lines are always attached at lower heights on the utility poles, directly to the pole and have black plastic coatings. Please contact your cable or telephone

company if you are concerned about trees contacting these lines. ****Services (Secondary) and Security Lighting ("Night Watchers"):** We do not prune or remove trees that appear to threaten individual service lines (pole-to-home) or security lighting ("night watchers"). These service lines are the responsibility of the customer. If you have trees that need pruning or removal near your service lines, please hire a professional tree-trimming contractor to perform the work. If requested, we can temporarily disconnect the service to your home, at no charge to you, so the contractor can work safely.

- h. Customer requests. If you see a tree or branch that looks dangerously close to the power lines (pole-to-pole), you can contact the San Marcos Electric Utility (SMEU) 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.
- i. 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, trees will not be removed without the property owner's permission.

(4) **Planting trees.** The National Arbor Day Foundation encourages thoughtful practices that help preserve community trees while also serving a utility company's customers. The following image demonstrates effective planting and 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



(Ord. No. [2018-04](#), § 33, 4-17-18)

Secs. 86.193—86.195. - Reserved.