Directional pruning promotes better tree health

When Alfred Joyce Kilmer wrote “I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree,” he was probably trying to tell an electric utility worker he didn’t want his trees trimmed or removed. And contrary to popular belief, electric utility workers like trees as much as Mr. Kilmer—unless they are growing under or too close to a power line.

Nearly one-third of power outages can be traced to tree interference. During windy and stormy weather, swaying and broken tree limbs can cause blinks, widespread outages and fires.

Northwestern Electric’s lines and poles are engineered to withstand many forces of Mother Nature. However, they may not withstand the force of a fallen tree or large branch. Trees touching power lines can actually drain electricity off the system, and in severe cases can cause line-protection devices to take a circuit out of service. Voltage dips caused when trees contact a power line can damage appliances and sensitive equipment.

Our right-of-way maintenance program—including tree trimming—is an important aspect of our goal to deliver power to you that is safe, reliable, environmentally responsible and affordable. In fact, it can help reduce outages caused by branches falling on lines during storms, shrubbery interfering with voltage levels or weeds in right-of-way areas making access to equipment difficult.

Trees growing too close to power lines also present a danger to the linemen and the public—especially children who like to climb trees. Northwestern Electric adheres to the National Electric Safety Code which requires electric utilities to prune tree limbs at least 10 feet away from power lines and electrical equipment.

Although most people understand why we need to trim trees close to power lines, they often question our tree pruning methods. Correct line clearance pruning can look quite severe. Our tree trimming crew no longer uses the misguided practice of topping trees. Tree topping, or “round-over” pruning, may be the most pleasing to the eye, but it is the most harmful to the health of the tree.

Ironically, many people top their trees because they think it will make them safer. Instead, topping creates hazardous trees. Along with promoting directional pruning to promote healthier trees, here are a few tips for keeping your trees healthy and safe:

1. Prune to live. Prune the tree in such a way that the branches and trunks are growing in a way that will make the tree healthier in the long run.
2. Prune to the future. Make sure to remove branches that will create a danger to the public or the system when they fall or break.
3. Prune to renew. Prune the tree to encourage new growth and limb development.

Proper line clearance pruning can look severe but it is the best method to help promote a healthy tree.
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rot, starving the tree and creating weak limbs, topping also increases wind resistance. The thick regrowth of suckers or sprouts resulting from topping make the tree top-heavy and more likely to catch the wind. This increases the chance of blown down trees in a storm. Selectively-thinned trees allow the wind to pass through the branches. It’s called “taking the sail out” of a tree.

Northwestern Electric uses an experienced utility arborist, Riggs Tree Service, for our tree trimming needs. “We use a method called directional pruning. It is better for the health of the tree, causing less rot, and stimulating less water sprout regrowth,” explains Jeremy Riggs, owner of Riggs Tree Service. “Rather than making many smaller cuts close to the wires, it is more preferable to make fewer, larger cuts, removing interfering branches where they meet the larger parent stem, or back to good sized side branches.”

According to Riggs, directional pruning helps save rate payers in the long run. “A topped tree must be done and re-done every few years and eventually removed when it dies. Topped trees also present a safety hazard because they are prone to breaking and can be hazardous.”

Unfortunately, there are no nice solutions to the problem of trees growing into power lines. The ideal situation would be no trees growing under or within 10 feet of power lines at all. But as long as trees grow naturally underneath the lines and homeowners prefer to have trees growing in their yards, tree trimming is the best method to keep limbs out of the lines.

Northwestern Electric will close November 26 and 27 to observe the Thanksgiving Holiday.
For emergencies call our outage hotline number
1-877-9NOPOWER
877.966.7693

August 2015 Operating Report

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tr>
<td>Revenue - Billing</td>
<td>3,456,831</td>
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Turn clocks back

Daylight Saving Time ends on Sunday, Nov. 1, at 2 a.m. Remember to set your clocks back one hour.
This is also a good time to check and replace the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms. Replace any smoke alarms older than ten years. Replace any CO alarms older than five years.

Say “Thank You” to a Vet

In honor of Veterans Day, we would like to recognize and thank our current employees and directors who have served in the armed forces. The next time you see these men, please take a moment to thank them for their willingness to serve our country.

Chris McGraw, Army
T. J. Province, Marine Corps
John Bruce, Jr., National Guard
Clair Craighead, National Guard
Wayne Hall, Army
Duane Henderson, National Guard
Ray Smith, Army

Hidden account number contest

Congratulations to Donna Hurt for recognizing her number in last month’s issue. The other number belonged to Justin Thompson.
We have hidden two account numbers somewhere in the articles in this newsletter. The numbers will always be enclosed in parentheses and will look similar to this example (XXXXXX).
If you recognize your account number, all you have to do is give us a call on or before the 8th of the current month and we’ll give you a credit on your bill for the amount stated.
This month’s numbers are worth $25 each. Happy hunting!

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Programmable thermostats can save up to $160 a year in energy costs. Match thermostat settings to your schedule: cold when you’re away and warm when you’re at home. In winter, set the thermostat to 68 degrees during the day (lower at night when you’re snug in bed). By turning your thermostat down 10 to 15 degrees for at least eight hours, (989636004) you can shave 5 to 15 percent from your heating costs.
Source: U.S. Department of Energy, TogetherWeSave.com

Oven-baked Chicken Parmesan

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
1 egg
3/4 c. Italian seasoned dry bread crumbs
1 jar (about 2 cups) spaghetti sauce
1 c. shredded mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 400°.
Dip chicken in egg, then bread crumbs. In 9x13-inch glass baking dish, arrange chicken. Bake uncovered 20 minutes.
Pour spaghetti sauce over chicken, then top with cheese. Bake 10 minutes or until chicken is cooked through out and no longer pink.
Serve with pasta or rice.
Prepare a winter survival kit

Severe winter storms often bring heavy accumulations of ice and snow, which can lead to downed power lines and extended outages. NWEC’s crews will work hard to restore power, but having a winter survival kit on hand is a smart idea.

The American Red Cross and Federal Emergency Management Agency suggest keeping some basics items on hand in case of an emergency.

- Food: Store food that does not require cooking, such as canned goods, crackers, dehydrated meats and dried fruit. Keep a large supply of water on hand. (14131001)
  - Medication: Be sure to refill all prescriptions in the event of a major power outage.
  - Identification: Keep all forms of identification handy, such as driver’s licenses, photo IDs and social security cards. Bank account information and insurance policies are also good to have on hand.
  - Other items: First Aid Kit, blankets, flashlight, battery-powered radio and extra batteries.

Save with Northwestern Electric’s rebate program

Get cash back on qualifying water heater and heat pump installations

Northwestern Electric will pay a cash rebate to qualifying members who replace or install new energy efficient heat pumps or electric water heaters.

Rebates for electric water heaters are being paid for tanks of 40 gallon or larger with an energy rating of .93 or greater. First time installation of a high efficient model, new or conversion from gas, qualifies for a $100 rebate. Replacement of an existing electric tank qualifies for a $50 rebate.

Once the new water heater is purchased and installed, contact NWEC. Jonna Hensley will come out and verify the installation. She will need to see the old tank and will ask for information pertaining to your purchase. After she verifies the new tank qualifies for the rebate, NWEC will mail a check directly to the homeowner.

Heat pumps, both air source and ground source, qualify for varying amounts of cash rebates.

For an air source heat pump unit to qualify, it must have a minimum rating of 16 SEER, 13.4 EER and an 8.5 HSPF. The rebate for a new unit or gas conversion is $250 per ton. If you are replacing an old electric unit, the rebate is $150 per ton.

Ground source heat pumps must meet a minimum rating of 16.1 EER and a 3.3 COP for closed loop systems and an 18.2 EER and 3.6 COP for open looped systems. New units and gas conversions qualify for a rebate of $250 per ton. Replacement units qualify for a rebate of $150 per ton.

The verification process for heat pumps is similar to the water heater process. Jonna will need to verify the installation and see the information pertaining to the purchase. After the verification process has been completed, Northwestern Electric will mail the check to the homeowner.

Rebates can not exceed $1,000 per application and all units must be AHRI certified. A rebate application form for heat pump installations is available on our website at www.nwecok.coop or you can call the office to request a form. All requests for rebates must be made within 30 days after the installation is completed.

Additional funds may be available for heat pump installations from our power supplier, Contact Jonna at 256.7425 or 800.375.7423 for more information.