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(Neb.)-NPPD To Begin Patrolling Power Lines For Vegetation



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 03/14/2013 02:44 PM

(COLUMBUS)-One tree limb. That's all it took to create the 2003 "northeast blackout" that cut power to 55 million people in eight states and Canada. After that blackout, new federal requirements and financial penalties for non-compliance were created to ensure the reliability of the electric grid.

Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) wants to make every effort to ensure a similar event will not happen across its electric transmission system in the state.

While tree trimming and removal have always been part of NPPD's operations, patrols of over 4,300 miles of high-voltage transmission lines (115,000 to 345,000 volts) are conducted annually across the state to identify and eliminate potential hazards. The patrols, done by helicopter or on foot, include trimming and removal of trees within the power line right-of-way. The patrols will begin in the eastern part of the state beginning on Monday, March 18th, and are expected to take three months to complete. This effort will ensure a reliable electric system while protecting the public.

"We manage trees for two reasons – to ensure our customers have dependable electric service and to prevent safety hazards," said NPPD Transmission and Distribution Manager John Humphrey. "By maintaining an appropriate clearance in the power line right-of-way, we can reduce tree-related power outages."

NPPD's vegetation management program is a year-round effort, whereby crews make identifying and addressing vegetation issues and line maintenance their focus.

Trees and limbs falling on power lines cause power outages and disruptions on NPPD's electric system. Trees too close to power lines can provide a path for electricity to reach the ground, which can result in property damage or serious injury to anyone touching the tree.

NPPD's policy is to remove trees and other woody-stemmed vegetation within the transmission line right of-way, as well as tall-growing trees located outside the right of way that could interfere with the continuous safe operation of the electric system. In many cases, this has meant removing trees in areas where they may have been trimmed in the past. NPPD will dispose of brush and wood resulting from non-emergency tree pruning.

The district follows proper guidelines set by the National Arbor Day Foundation, Utility Arborists Association, International Society of Arboriculture, and the Tree Care Industry Association. NPPD is a member in good standing with the Tree Line USA Program and has been recognized for its efforts in this area over the years. "We work to address issues and resolve concerns customers and property owners have when it comes to trimming and removal of trees within the right-of-way," Humphrey explained. "We keep them informed about our activities near or on their property."

Humphrey also pointed out that landowners can play an important role in vegetation management by planting the right trees in the right place. NPPD provides information to help landowners understand this process. Information on NPPD's vegetation management program and tree planting can be found at <http://www.nppd.com/tree-program/vegetation-management-program/>.

--NPPD