

# VEGETATION MANAGEMENT FAQ

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## WHAT IS “VEGETATION MANAGEMENT”?

Vegetation management is a broad term that includes: tree pruning, brush removal, weed abatement, hazard tree identification and removal, and the implementation of strategies to minimize incompatible species (trees that will grow too tall) under and near power. These efforts are not only governed by state and federal laws and regulations, but also provide for the reliability of powerlines and public safety.

Vegetation management is necessary because service interruptions, fires, damage, and power systems failures can be caused by trees, tree limbs, or palm fronds contacting or falling across utility power lines. Weather-related storms can cause trees or their branches to break and fall onto power lines. High temperatures, wind, snow and ice loading conditions can cause wires to sag into trees below.

## WHAT'S MY RESPONSIBILITY?

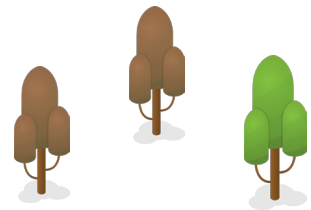
Homeowners hiring tree trimmers to trim or remove dead, dying trees next to power lines, must notify SCE when planning to trim or remove trees that could come in contact with power lines under any circumstances. Only specially-trained tree trimmers can work within 10 feet of a powerline. SCE has a program to top or remove trees to a level that would allow trimmers without this training to remove the rest of the tree.

To report vegetation concerns customers should call SCE directly at **1-800-655-4555**

## WHAT IS MEANT BY A HAZARD TREE?

Hazard trees include dead or dying trees, dead parts of live trees, or unstable live trees (due to structural defects or other factors) that are within striking distance of people or property. Hazard trees have the potential to cause property damage, personal injury, or fatality in the event of a failure.

Hazard trees, as defined by California Public Resources Code (PRC) 4293, will be felled or topped to avoid outages and to reduce fire hazards.



## WHAT IS THE DRIVER BEHIND THE MITIGATION OF HAZARD TREES?

Public and worker safety is of the utmost importance. Additionally Service interruptions, fires, damage, and power systems failures can be caused by trees, tree limbs, or palm fronds contacting or falling across utility power lines. Weather-related storms can cause trees or their branches to break and fall onto power lines. High temperatures, wind, snow and ice loading conditions can cause wires to sag into trees below. We have increased the frequency of vegetation patrols in the most severe high fire risk areas to identify and help mitigate potential hazards.

Years of historic drought and bark beetle infestation have caused the number of dead and dying trees in California to reach catastrophic levels. The U.S. Forest Service estimates that 130 million trees have died over the course of the five-year drought. These dead trees pose a significant hazard to people, wildlife and critical infrastructure.

## WHAT ARE YOUR CRITERIA FOR REMOVAL?

In an effort to ensure compliance with regulations, fire prevention, property protection, public and employee safety, and the reliability of the SCE electric system, SCEs routinely removes trees in proximity to their electric system. While the criteria for removal is usually determined on a case by case basis, it generally includes trees that are dead, dying, diseased or leaning toward power lines, palm trees, and fast growing trees that cannot be effectively controlled by routine pruning. Trees growing on or directly adjacent to transmission right-of-way may also be removed during routine vegetation management maintenance.

We have increased the frequency of vegetation patrols in the most severe high fire risk areas to identify and help mitigate potential hazards. To further ensure fire prevention, property protection, public and employee safety, and the reliability of the electric system SCE removes dead, dying, and diseased trees that may negatively impact the electric system.

## WHAT PROACTIVE MEASURES IS SCE TAKING TO REDUCE VEGETATION ISSUES?

In addition to adherence to scheduled routine maintenance, SCE has several separate activities and programs to proactively reduce vegetation management issues. These programs range from public education activities regarding proper planting and safety, to proactive inspection and removal programs related to hazard tree identification and removal.

## WHAT TECHNOLOGY IS SCE IMPLEMENTING TO HELP REDUCE ANY RISKS? WHAT IS LIDAR?

SCE uses an advanced laser surveying method called Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) to enhance vegetation management in areas of our service territory. This technology allows us to more precisely and efficiently assess vegetation near power lines in difficult to access areas, further reducing fire risk. We are also expanding the use of LiDAR to additional high fire risk areas in our territory, which should enable us to more closely monitor hundreds of square miles of rugged high fire risk areas.

## WILL I SEE CREWS MORE OFTEN?

Most areas are scheduled for routine tree trimming once a year. If you live in a high fire risk area, it is possible you may see crews more often.





## HOW MANY HAZARD TREES ARE IDENTIFIED AND MITIGATED EACH YEAR?

SCE inspects approximately 900,000 trees annually and trims nearly 690,000 per year. The company also frequently monitors trees outside SCE's designated trimming zones that could potentially fall into power lines to determine whether they are dead, dying, diseased, or hazardous. On average, about 40,000 dead or dying trees affected by drier-than-normal conditions are removed each year and this number has increased in recent years. SCE is also evaluating opportunities to perform more expansive trimming and removal of trees to further reduce the fire risks associated with trees falling into our power lines.

## WHAT ARE THE LAWS AND REGULATIONS RELATED TO REMOVAL OF HAZARD TREES AND OTHER VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES?

The following are just some examples of the laws and regulations related to the requirements which necessitate vegetation management:

- California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) General Order 95
- Public Resource Codes 4292 and 4293
- CPUC Safety Regulations

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR HOME OWNERS:

- DOWNLOAD the "Tree Mortality – Drought and Bark Beetle, What Property Owners Need to Know" flyer and other information from this website:
- <http://www.readyforwildfire.org/Bark-Beetle-Campaign-Toolkit/>

