Rochester Public Utilities has taken an aggressive approach to improve power reliability. Not only have we used and continue to use our own staff to perform tree trimming, the board has authorized additional outside tree services to clear lines and right of ways. Wright Tree Service has been contracted to provide this service. Wright has been in the utility tree trimming business since 1940 and employs highly trained and certified line clearance tree trimming specialists. Additional information regarding Wright Tree Service can be found on their website at www.wrighttree.com.

Is permission of the property owner necessary before doing tree work?

The utilities’ easements grant RPU the right to trim trees without property-owner permission to provide for a safe and reliable electric system. However, RPU respects the property of its customers 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. RPU recommends the removal of trees that will require extensive trimming on a regular basis. However, trees will not be removed without the property owner’s permission.

RPU has conducted a tree inventory in the City of Rochester and identified approximately 1100 hazard trees. A hazard tree is on that is in inherent danger of causing a power outage. If your property contains a hazard tree, you will be contacted directly by an RPU representative to have this tree removed.

How does RPU know when a tree needs to be trimmed or removed?

The following priority will be followed in determining when and where tree trimming will be done:

1. Reports of electrical outages caused by trees.
2. Areas where trees have been damaged by storms.
3. During the regular tree-trimming cycle.
4. Periodic inspections by RPU personnel.
5. Reports from customers indicating potential tree/power-line problems.
Can a private property owner or commercial tree-trimmer obtain help in trimming or removing trees near electric wires?

RPU will assist property owners and/or their commercial contractors, at their request, with the trimming and removal of trees that are near RPU wires. Please call the office at 507-280-1500 to make an appointment. A representative of RPU will make an inspection and explain to the property owner or contractor what we can do to assist. RPU's assistance may include one or both of the following activities:

- The temporary rerouting, de-energizing or removal of electric wires that may be hazardous to workers. RPU will coordinate with the property owner or contractor the time the work can be done.

- The trimming of the tree so that it can be safely removed or trimmed by the property owner or contractor. All wood will be left on the property owner's premises. RPU is not responsible for cutting wood to size or piling brush. The customer or contractor will be responsible for removing brush that is blocking sidewalks or driveways.

How does RPU determine how far we remove trees from our lines?

When RPU performs tree trimming, the crews are instructed to clear lines to a minimum of 10 feet from our lines. This effectively gives us a four to five-year cutting cycle. Depending on the application, we might cut further back to leave trees as healthy as possible. For example, if you cut the majority of a fir limb off, but not all the way to the base of the tree, the limb will die. In time, we will get members calling back explaining how poorly the tree looks and in response we will send crew back to cut limb all the way over to the base. This is expensive and time consuming, especially when we could be putting our energy into addition tree trimming.

Why does RPU cut this far back?

Other than some of the reasons alluded to above and other more obvious reasons, such as preventive reduction in outages, limbs touching and burning on electric lines is one of the principal wastes of electricity. Also, with lines clear from trees, our linemen have the necessary room to operate and restore power more quickly by not having to manipulate downed power lines from around trees.
What do I do if I see a limb or tree on a line?

Please call 507-280-9191 and we will send someone out to check on it. If it is on or near our lines we will remove it. *Never try to do this yourself!*

How close can I plant trees or bushes next to RPU’s poles or underground transformers?

RPU personnel need to have access to all of its electric facilities for maintenance and storm repair. Please keep trees a minimum of 20 feet from overhead lines. If you must plant trees by lines, make sure that they are small and can’t reach our lines. Please call 507-280-1500 with any questions. Underground transformers require a minimum of 10 feet of clearance so that personnel can safely access them.

What do I do if I have a danger tree near RPU’s lines?

Please call RPU at 507-280-1500 and we will send someone out to look over the tree. We will work with you and/or your contractor to make sure that the tree is taken down safely.