



# Sierra Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Subject: Vegetation Management Plan		Board Policy Number: 410	
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## POLICY STATEMENT

It is the objective of this Vegetation Management Plan to manage vegetation that has the potential to adversely affect the electric distribution system of Sierra Electric Cooperative (SEC) in a regular maintenance cycle to maximize system safety and consistency in a cost effective manner. Cycle lengths will depend on average site conditions for different areas of the system, vegetation present, historical data and/or personal knowledge. The cycle length of a given area will consider the safety of SEC employees, members and the general public. SEC's vision of providing reliable service at a reasonable cost is inherent to this plan. It is also understood that the plan will have the flexibility to deviate from scheduled work to attend to unscheduled (critical) hot spots as the need should arise. "SEC's Representative" will be the General Manager, Operations Manager, the Line Foreman, or their Designee. For purposes of this policy, the terms "easements" and "right-of-way" are interchangeable.

## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT WORK SPECIFICATIONS

### I. Extent of Obligations

#### A. General

SEC shall perform all required tree pruning, tree removal, and brush control work involving SEC's distribution rights-of-way in areas designated by SEC in accordance with the terms, conditions, and standards set forth in the Specifications set out in this Policy. SEC acknowledges that the primary goal of line clearance activities is to maintain the safety, reliability, and accessibility of SEC's distribution facilities, and recognizes the responsibility of maintaining the best possible public relations while furnishing its members with reliable, quality electric service. SEC is aware of the landowner's property rights and will make every effort to keep them informed and involved in the process. SEC shall make every effort to ensure that the member(s) understand what vegetation management work needs to be done to ensure the safety and integrity of the power supply system.

#### B. Safety

These specifications are not intended to replace or interfere with SEC's implementation of SEC Safety Standards, of any Federal, State, or Local safety standards or regulations. SEC'S personnel shall comply with the latest revisions of the SEC Safety Policies and Standards, as well as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) regulations and standards applicable to the work described in these specifications, including, but not limited to, OSHA Regulations 1910.269 and 1910.331 (see Code of Federal Regulations 29 CFR Part 1910), ANSI Standards Z133.1 and A300, and all implementing regulations. SEC is not suggesting



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that these are the only such laws, rules, codes, or regulations with which SEC and its employees need to comply.

- (1) All SEC personnel shall be properly attired (no sleeveless shirts, shorts, tennis shoes, etc.) and act in a professional manner at all times.
- (2) Fighting, horse play, or other disorderly conduct by SEC personnel will not be tolerated on SEC's system.
- (3) SEC personnel shall refrain from the use of profanity or other distasteful or abusive language while on the SEC system.
- (4) Work areas shall be maintained in a safe, orderly and clean condition. All project related debris, trash and other related items shall be removed during and after work.

## **C. Maps**

SEC will furnish appropriate maps for the purpose of performing all tree pruning, tree removal, and brush control work on the distribution rights-of-way in its service area. SEC shall adhere to any known special provisions of easements or requirements of local, state, or federal authorities affecting tree and brush control.

## **D. Notice to Property Owners**

- (1) All contact with members, landowners, and public officials shall be done in a courteous and business-like manner. SEC's Representative will be responsible for contacting each landowner individually to ensure that the property owner understands what work will be performed and exactly what trees and brush will be pruned or removed on their property. The most appropriate and acceptable route through the property for access to the work site shall be confirmed during this landowner notification process.
- (2) Discussions of impending maintenance shall be recorded on a "Vegetation Management – Notice to Property Owner" form as attached to this policy either as "Exhibit A – Pruning Work" or "Exhibit B – Clearing Work" in order to avoid misunderstandings.
- (3) If a property owner objects to the necessary pruning of trees or clearing of brush during the notification process, SEC shall make every reasonable follow-up effort to explain this policy and the necessity of rights-of-way clearing and maintenance. SEC's Field Personnel shall not negotiate for reduced clearance or any other deviations from the Specifications. If all efforts to obtain consent are unsuccessful, SEC's Field Personnel in Charge shall advise SEC's Representative verbally or in writing of the circumstances involved, listing names of landowners refusing permission to clear, their addresses, reasons for refusal, and the efforts made by SEC's Field Personnel in Charge to obtain consent. In such case, SEC shall bypass the property owner's land and proceed to the next property. At no time shall SEC's Field Personnel dispute the right of the land owner to have input into what work will be done on the property. SEC's Representative shall follow



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up with all landowners refusing to consent to the necessary line clearance and advise SEC's Field Personnel of the work to be done on the property.

## **E. Vegetation Management Tracking Work Reports**

SEC's Field Personnel shall furnish all Vegetation Management activity information to SEC's I.T. Department for inclusion in SEC's digital mapping resource.

## **F. Complaints and Damage Claims**

Landowner related complaints received by SEC shall be reported to SEC's Representative as soon as possible by phone call, text message, or leaving a voice message with all pertinent information about the complaint. Verbal notification shall be followed up with a written report describing the damage claim and SEC's proposed rectification within one week.

## **G. Highway Permits**

SEC shall obtain all necessary Local, State, and Federal highway permits for routine right-of-way maintenance along roadways prior to commencing work. SEC must be knowledgeable of and adhere to all rules, regulations, and restrictions related to work on New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) rights of way.

## **H. Federal Lands**

SEC shall contact the appropriate officials in charge of managing Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), United States Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other Federal lands within SEC's service territory prior to performing work in these areas. SEC recognizes that the NPS, USFS, BLM, and other Federal agencies have the authority to override some aspects of the Vegetation Management Work Specifications, especially with respect to brush clearing, tree removal and disposal of wood and chips.

## **II. Pruning Specifications**

### **A. Pruning Methods**

Vegetation pruning methods acceptable to SEC include the following, which are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2:

- Crown reduction
- Side pruning
- Overhang pruning
- Under pruning

- (1) SEC shall trim all trees using these pruning techniques as described in ANSI A300 (Part 1) – *Pruning Standards or the International Society of Arboriculture's Best Management Practices – Utility Pruning of Trees* unless otherwise directed by SEC's Representative. Property owners who refuse to permit proper vegetation pruning determined necessary to prevent potential damage to the electric power supply system should be bypassed and referred to SEC's Representative.



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- (2) Proper pruning methods minimize trimming frequency and promote desirable tree growth characteristics. Pruning shall be performed to direct tree growth away from SEC's electric equipment.
- (3) SEC will assess the tree and its relation to the line before starting to prune to determine the best locations for pruning cuts. Ground observation, especially of yard trees, will be made prior to the commencement of pruning to decide which limbs can be removed to best obtain the proper clearance and retain a natural appearance. Whenever possible pruning cuts will be carefully placed and angled to minimize visual impact from the ground.
- (4) Limbs and branches shall be cut back to a suitable lateral limb or branch that is at least one-third of the diameter of the one being cut. If a branch or limb of adequate size is not available, the pruning cut shall be back to the parent branch or the tree trunk.
- (5) All cuts shall be made sufficiently close to the trunk or parent limb without cutting into the branch bark collar or leaving a protruding stub. Clean cuts shall be made at all times. Care shall be taken to prevent tearing or peeling of the bark. See Figure 3 for an illustration of proper pruning cuts.
- (6) In reducing tree size (crown reduction), not more than one-fourth of the total foliage area should be removed during a single pruning operation. Remove only as much of the crown as necessary to provide adequate clearance while making proper lateral cuts. If more than 25 percent of the crown must be removed to obtain proper clearance SEC shall contact the landowner for permission to take down the entire tree or notify SEC's Representative.
- (7) All branches, limbs, and tree tops that hang up in the tree being worked on, or in adjacent trees, shall be removed before leaving the work site.



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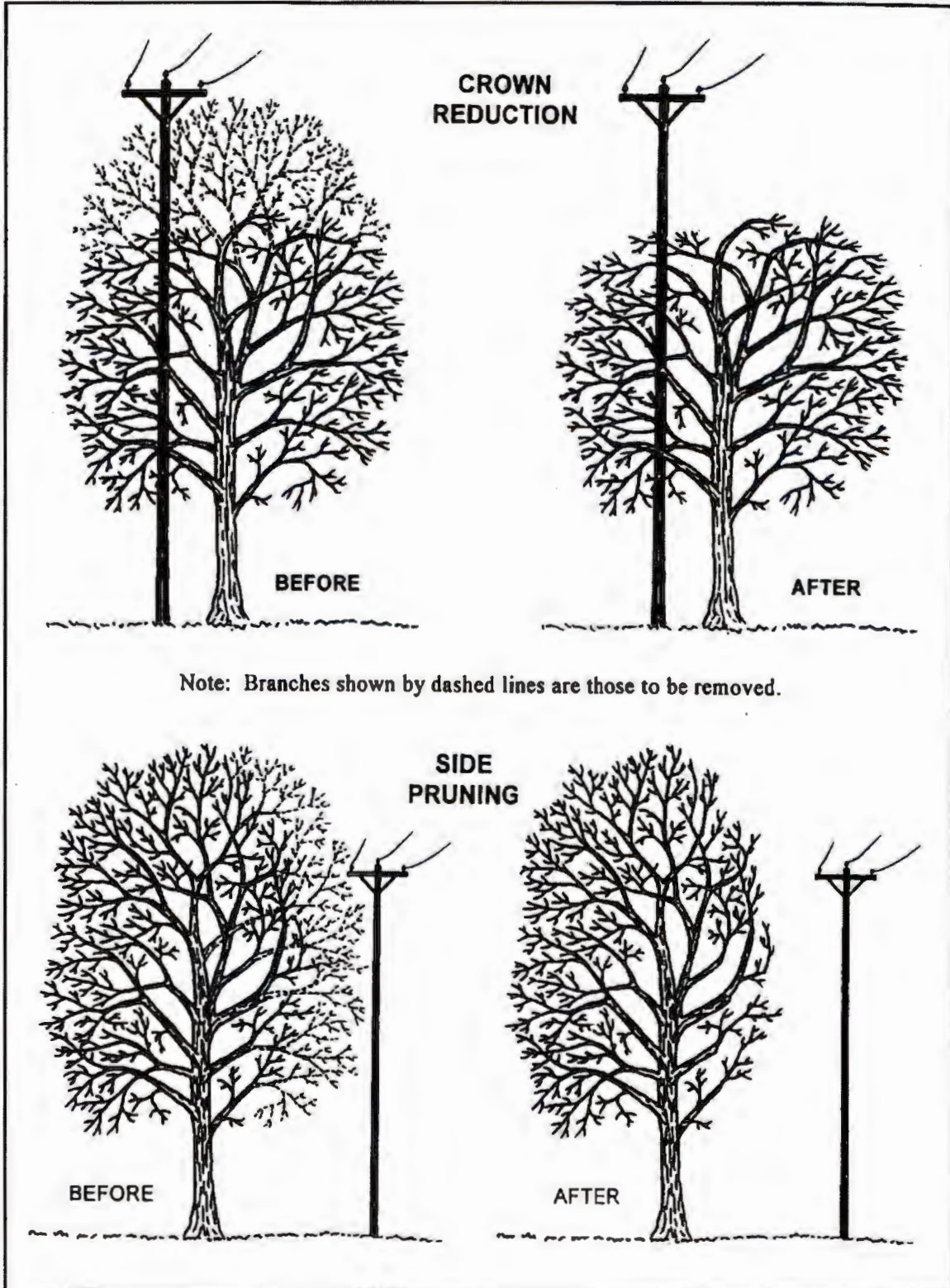


Figure 1. Proper Crown Reduction and Side Pruning



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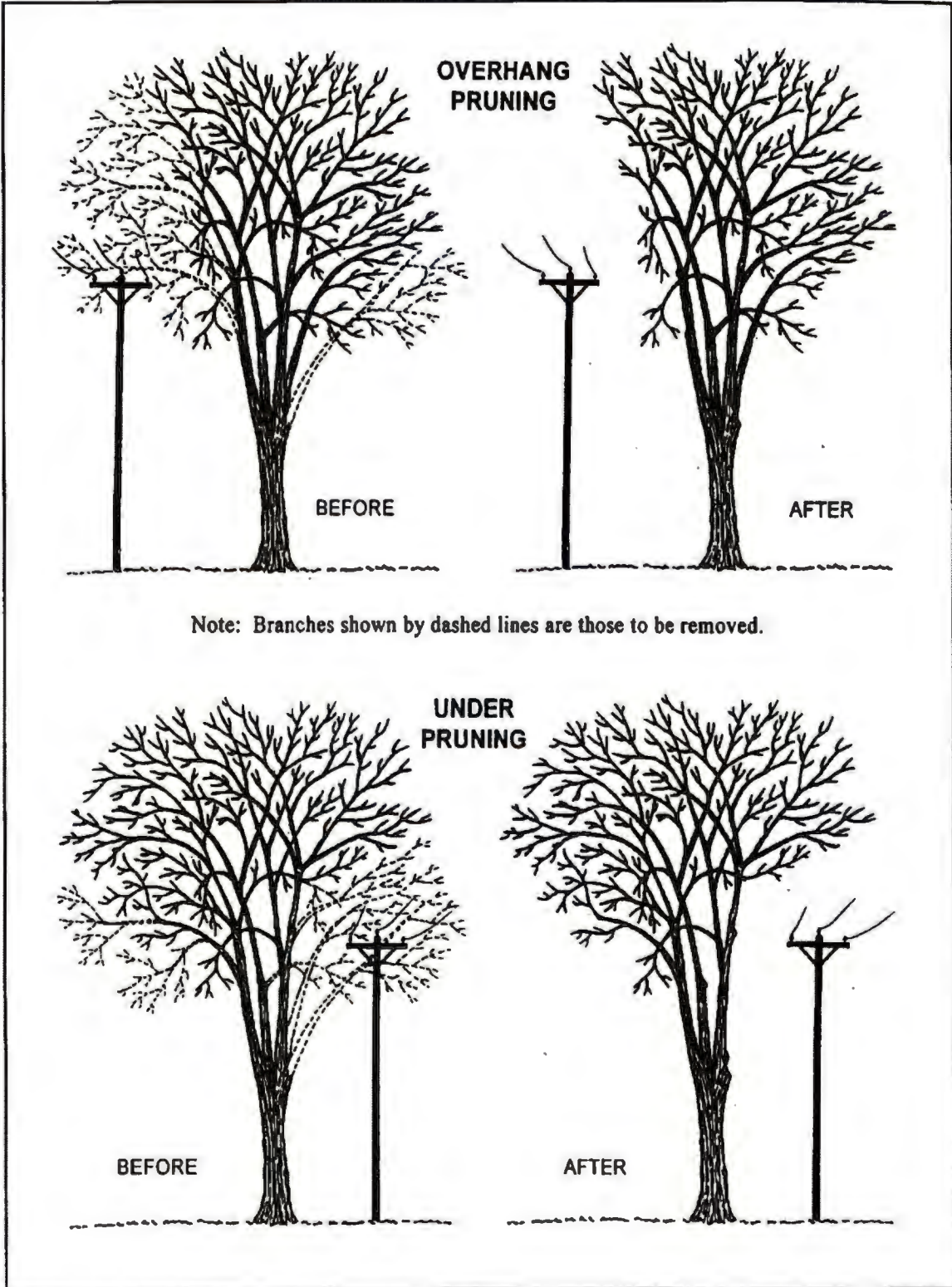


Figure 2. Proper Overhang and Under Pruning



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1. Remove most of the branch weight above area of final cut (dotted line).
2. Make cut to remove stub (solid line) at the same angle as branch bark ridge, without cutting into ridge.

1. Remove most of branch weight by cutting branch about 1 foot from the trunk (dotted line).
2. Note location of branch collar and branch bark ridge. Make cut to remove stub (solid line) on outside edge of branch collar. Branch bark ridge should remain uncut.

**CROWN REDUCTION**

**HARDWOODS**

**CONIFERS**

Figure 3. Proper Pruning Cuts



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## B. Clearance Requirements

SEC'S intent is to complete routine line clearance on its electric distribution lines on a five (5) year cycle. Therefore, SEC shall prune trees to provide for five (5) years of clearance whenever possible. To achieve five (5) years of clearance, the following tree-to-conductor clearances shall be the minimum goal when pruning trees around overhead conductors (exceptions for services and secondary's follow):

- Ten (10) feet of clearance for all trees located beneath or alongside primary overhead conductors;

In locations where clearance is not limited by aesthetics or the desires of property owners, the preceding clearance guidelines shall be considered the minimum acceptable pruning clearance unless the tree is properly side pruned back to the main trunk or a major limb. The tree's location, health, species, and growth rate should be considered when determining the minimum acceptable pruning clearance.

### (1) Wooded Rights-of-Way and Other Rural Areas

- (a) Any tree with limbs or branches that will grow into the conductors within five (5) growing seasons shall be pruned back to the trunk of the tree or lateral limb, whichever is appropriate. The distance to the conductor after pruning will vary according to the species of tree, but a minimum of ten (10) feet of clearance shall be provided. When pruning a tree, all limbs are to be trimmed from the ground to as high as the aerial lift can reach. However, if there are limbs higher than the reach of the aerial lift that would hit the conductor from the hinge point of those limbs, these limbs shall be removed by whatever method needed. All dead wood overhanging SEC facilities shall be removed from the tree regardless of its height above the conductors. Stumps shall be cut flush, not to exceed two (2) inches in height unless otherwise directed by the landowner.
- (b) Where SEC has specified easement widths, brush and other undesirable vegetation shall be cleared from the full width of such easements except where SEC has not made use of the full easement width. In such cases, and on all other rights-of-way, brush and undesirable vegetation shall be cleared to the width historically maintained. All brush exceeding eighteen (18) inches in height shall be cut at ground level.
- (c) In many cases SEC desires to maintain desirable shrub species on its easements. SEC's Representative will determine whether low-growing species should be cleared from the right-of-way. If so, this brush shall be cut as close to ground level as possible. If the landowner has planted trees or shrubs within the right-of-way, SEC's Field Personnel shall notify SEC's Representative prior to clearing the easement.

Undesirable vegetation and brush shall be cleared from the full width of the easement and shall be cut as close to ground level as possible.





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- (d) Brush, vines, and undesirable vegetation shall be hand cut from around poles and guy wires. Brush hand cut around poles in cultivated fields or pastures shall be removed from the field or pasture unless other arrangements are made with the landowner.
- (e) Vines shall be removed off poles and guys as high as can be reached, but a minimum of a two (2) foot visible gap around the entire circumference of the pole shall be cleared.
- (f) SEC shall identify and take down all dead or other hazard trees that could hit SEC's facilities upon falling. Trees outside of the right-of-way with obvious rot, fruiting bodies, conks, significant lean toward SEC's facilities, cavities, etc. shall be proactively removed by SEC after gaining written permission from the landowner.

## (2) Yard Trees and Municipally Owned Trees

- (a) *CONDUCTORS ABOVE AND AT THE SIDE OF TREES:* SEC shall prune trees to exceed the anticipated growth expected in five growing seasons minimum. At least ten (10) feet of clearance shall be obtained from primary conductors, wherever possible.
- (b) *CONDUCTORS UNDER TREES:* SEC shall regain previous clearance and remove all hazardous over-hangs that in hinging, would contact conductors. All dead limbs overhanging SEC's facilities shall be removed. At least fifteen (15) feet of clearance shall be obtained on all branches overhanging primary conductors.
- (c) *CONDUCTORS THROUGH TREES:* Original clearance shall be regained by trimming all new growth. SEC shall prune as much as possible to help direct new growth of trees away from the conductors and will attempt to avoid unnecessary shortening (tipping) of branches growing away from the conductor.

## 3) Secondary & Service Conductors less than 600 volts

- (a) *OPEN-WIRE SECONDARY AND SERVICE LINES, INSULATED:* SEC shall prune trees for a minimum of five (5) feet of clearance on all sides of open-wire secondary and service conductors.

## **C. Disposal of Debris**

- (1) SEC shall dispose of all debris resulting from trimming or brush control in a manner satisfactory to the landowner and SEC's Representative. Generally, branches and limbs in wooded rights-of-way will be eliminated by chipping into the adjacent woods. Debris from pruning in yards and other maintained areas shall be chipped into trucks or trailers and hauled from the site. All large pieces



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of wood shall be removed from the right-of-way and left with the property owner unless advised otherwise.

- (2) No hangers shall be left in trees. No brush or tree limbs shall be left in fields, yards, creeks, rivers, ponds, or other bodies of water, or on NMDOT easements. No garbage or trash (e.g., cans, bottles, sandwich wrappers, etc.) shall be left on the right of way or mixed with pruning debris.
- (3) SEC realizes it is not possible to have all debris cleaned up immediately after pruning, but shall remove all pruning debris as soon as possible. Brush created by pruning of yard trees or trees on public property shall be cleaned up within 24 hours after cutting unless other arrangements are made with the landowner and SEC's Representative is notified. No brush or pruning debris shall be left in yards or other maintained areas over the weekend or holidays. All pruning debris on wooded rights-of-way shall be cleaned up within five (5) days after the pruning is completed.
- (4) When clearing some rights-of-way through the mountains, SEC may determine that pruning debris will be left on site or follow USFS guidelines for "lop and scatter". Clean up in these areas will be limited to removing debris from water bodies and chopping debris with chainsaws to minimize the height of the debris on the ground and reduce future challenges of accessing SEC's facilities. Brush shall be moved to the edge of the right of way and mulched down with chainsaws to enable safe access to SEC's facilities.

#### **D. Resulting Wood**

All wood resulting from right-of-way clearance remains the property of the landowner. The wood shall be cut into manageable lengths and moved to the edge of the right-of-way unless otherwise specified by the landowner and approved by SEC's Representative. Wood will be removed from the landowner's property only when specific arrangements have been made by the property owner with SEC's Representative.

#### **E. Tree Houses**

All tree-houses, platforms, hunting stands, or other tree structures that are within ten (10) feet of overhead wires and are encountered during vegetation management operations shall be promptly reported to SEC's Representative. SEC's representative will notify the property owner that the structure must be removed to eliminate a potentially hazardous situation.

## **II. Tree Removal**

In consideration of safety, satisfactory line clearance, economic operation, service reliability, public relations, and the appearance of public roads, it may be desirable to remove certain trees rather than to prune them. SEC shall remove all hazard trees encountered during line clearance operations. SEC will remove trees directly under the conductors and any other small trees (less than twelve (12) inches diameter at breast height) that could impact the reliable delivery of electricity to SEC's members. Trees



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outside of the right-of-way shall be removed only with the written concurrence of the landowner, except for dead or other hazard trees in remote sections of the right-of-way.

## A. Felling


Trees shall be felled away from the conductors whenever possible. If this is not possible, they shall be roped or topped before felling to prevent the possibility of the tree striking the conductors or other SEC facilities.

## B. Cut Stumps

Stumps of removed trees shall be cut flush and as close to ground level as possible not to exceed two (2) inches in height, unless otherwise directed by the landowner.

## C. Hazard Trees

Hazard trees are dead, rotten, split, leaning, or otherwise defective trees (e.g., obvious conks, fruiting bodies, cavities, etc.) along established rights-of-way that could hit the conductor in falling. All hazard trees that pose a significant risk to SEC's electric equipment shall be cut so the stumps do not exceed two (2) inches in height, unless otherwise specified by the landowner or SEC's Representative. Dead trees along wooded rights-of-way may be topped below conductor height and left standing for wildlife habitat, unless the resulting stub could fall across a public roadway.

	17 FEB 2017
Board President Signature	Date



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## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT NOTICE TO PROPERTY OWNERS

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Account/Meter# \_\_\_\_\_ Pole Location (Start) \_\_\_\_\_ Pole Location (End) \_\_\_\_\_

Proper lateral pruning methods acceptable to Sierra Electric Cooperative (SEC) are the following listed below and illustrated on the back of this page:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overhang Pruning | <input type="checkbox"/> Under Pruning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crown Reduction  | <input type="checkbox"/> Side Pruning  |

Description of Work:

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**NOTE: SEC FIELD REPRESENTATIVE SHALL CIRCLE PRUNING METHODS USED FOR THIS LOCATION ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE.**

Signatures acknowledging discussion and review of work to be performed:

SEC Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Property/Land Owner: \_\_\_\_\_



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## VEGETATION MANAGEMENT NOTICE TO PROPERTY OWNERS

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Account/Meter# \_\_\_\_\_ Pole Location (Start) \_\_\_\_\_ Pole Location (End) \_\_\_\_\_

The right-of-way shall be prepared by removing trees, clearing underbrush, and trimming trees so that the right-of-way is cleared close to the ground and to the width specified. However, low growing shrubs, which will not interfere with the operation or maintenance of the line, shall be left undisturbed if so directed by the owner. Slash may be chipped and blown on the right-of-way if so specified.

The landowner's written permission shall be received prior to cutting trees outside of the right-of-way. Trees fronting each side of the right-of-way shall be trimmed symmetrically unless otherwise specified. Dead trees beyond the right-of-way which would strike the line in falling shall be removed. Leaning trees beyond the right-of-way which would strike the line in falling shall be topped. Shade, fruit, or ornamental trees shall be trimmed and not removed, unless otherwise authorized.

Description of Work:

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Signatures acknowledging discussion and review of work to be performed:

SEC Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Property/Land Owner: \_\_\_\_\_