



SA Power Networks

Tree trimming around powerlines

Why do we need to trim trees?

Trees must be kept clear of overhead powerlines to ensure the safety and reliability of electricity supply.

Tree trimming around powerlines is carried out to minimise the risks of:

- electric shock;
- power interruptions and damage to powerlines; and
- bushfires in high-risk areas.

Who is responsible for tree trimming?

State legislation sets out specific clearance requirements for property owners/occupiers and SA Power Networks.

A **private supply line** is any powerline on your property which supplies electricity to you and operates at 19,000 volts or less.

Owners/occupiers are responsible for the clearance of all vegetation on their property around their **private supply lines**, including vegetation overhanging from a neighbouring property. SA Power Networks is responsible for naturally occurring, non-nurtured vegetation around private supply lines.

SA Power Networks is responsible for establishing and maintaining clearances around all **public supply lines**, except in certain areas where the responsibility may be shared with local councils.

If a powerline crosses land but does not supply the occupant of that land, it is a public supply line and SA Power Networks is responsible for vegetation clearance on that section of line.

For a visual explanation of these requirements, refer to the illustration on page 2 of this document.

What must be considered when trimming trees around powerlines?

Electricity can be dangerous. A branch or tree in contact with high voltage lines can potentially carry enough of an electric shock to kill. If you want to trim or remove trees near powerlines, you must take adequate safety precautions.

Under no circumstances should you bring anything that can conduct electricity close to powerlines. When using hand tools to clear vegetation, the safe working distance will vary between one to three metres, according to the powerline type and voltage.

When using power tools, the minimum safe working distance is three metres for all voltages (up to and including 33kV) and for all types of powerlines.

If you need to trim close to any powerline, contact the Office of the Technical Regulator (OTR) for safety advice.

Given the risk associated with working around powerlines, we recommend you engage a qualified contractor to undertake this work, at your cost.

What are the legal requirements?

The Electricity Act 1996 specifies that SA Power Networks must carry out trimming and clearing of vegetation around powerlines and states the required clearance distances.

SA Power Networks notifies local councils when tree trimming is to occur on public property in their area.

If trimming is to take place around powerlines in a given area, SA Power Networks will provide the owner/occupier with 30 days written notice (except when emergency trimming is required). The owner/occupier then has 21 days to object in writing to the Technical Regulator.

What are we doing to minimise the impact of tree trimming on the environment?

SA Power Networks is seeking to find a way of balancing community expectations regarding aesthetic and environmental considerations and our compliance with legislated tree clearances.

There are a number of ways in which the impact of tree trimming can be reduced or avoided, although these have been extra costs attached to them. Options include:

- ensuring suitable species are planted underneath or near powerlines;
- more frequent tree trimming cycles;
- insulating powerlines, including using Aerial Bundled Conductors (ABC);
- relocation of powerlines;
- removal of existing powerlines; and
- undergrounding of powerlines.

We are currently engaging in discussions on vegetation management options with stakeholders. These discussions will help us in developing our proposal to the regulator for the 2015–2020 regulatory period.

What can you do to help minimise the need to trim trees around powerlines?

You can help reduce tree trimming by calling SA Power Networks for information on recommended 'clear zones' before planting new vegetation near a powerline on your property. We also publish lists of the most appropriate species to plant around powerlines on our website www.sapowernetworks.com.au

For further information

If you have any queries about vegetation clearance, please contact SA Power Networks on 13 12 61 or the Office of the Technical Regulator on 8226 5500.

The [Trees and powerlines^{\[pdf\]}](#) brochure from the OTR has detailed information on tree trimming obligations and issues.

For further information contact SA Power Networks on: 13 12 61 or visit our website at: www.sapowernetworks.com.au
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