PSE&G

NEW VEGETATION MANAGEMENT RULES

The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) has recently adopted changes to the Rules concerning electric distribution vegetation management procedures. The new Rules state that "vegetation management practices shall include removal of all overhanging vegetation from the lock out zone on the distribution circuit." However, there is a mature tree exclusion which allows certain trees to be exempt from this new regulation. As a result, PSE&G will need to trim more aggressively than we have done in the past.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are there new Vegetation Management Rules?

The Rules are contained in the New Jersey Administrative Code and are reviewed and revised every seven years.

How were the Rules revised?

The BPU initiated a stakeholder process in early 2014 to discuss revisions to the Rules. Participants in the stakeholder process included representatives from:

- The New Jersey League of Municipalities
- The New Jersey Division of the Rate Counsel
- The State's Four Electric Distribution Companies (EDCs) including their Vegetation Managers (VMs)
- BPU Staff Members
- The Sierra Club
- The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protective (DEP)
- The New Jersey Board of Certified Tree Experts

The first stakeholder meeting was held in Trenton on April 1, 2014. Participants provided comments to Board staff's initial proposed revisions to the Rules later that month.

This process continued for a year with comments submitted by the stakeholders on Board staff's final draft on May 15, 2015.

What were the next steps?

Board staff reviewed the stakeholders' comments and on July 22, 2015 presented their recommendations on the final wording of the revised Rules to the BPU Commissioners. The recommendations were accepted and the revised Rules were printed in the August 17, 2015 edition of the New Jersey Register, at which time they became effective.

What was the major change to the Vegetation Management Rules?

The major change to the Rules is found in N.J.A.C. 14:5-9.8 (b) 1 and 2 states the following:

"Starting on January 1, 2016, vegetation management practices shall include removal of all overhanging vegetation from the lock out zone on the distribution circuit. The lock out zone is defined as the portion of the distribution circuit which begins at the substation and continues to the first protective device. For circuits that do not have a protective device, the EDC's engineering department and VM will designate the area referred to as the lock out zone. Mature trees may be exempt from the above requirements at the reasonable discretion of the EDC's VM as it pertains to the lock out zone."

What is the approximate length of a circuit's lock out zone?

On PSE&G's 4-kV and 13-kV distribution circuits, it is approximately half the length of the circuit which could extend up to several miles.

What is considered a mature tree?

A mature tree is a "tree that has reached at least 2/3 of the expected mature size (height/diameter) for its species taking into account allowances for geographic location and external influences."

What procedure will be followed involving trees on private property?

Permission to trim trees on private property will have to be obtained from the property owner as it is now.

Has the tree trimming schedule changed?

No. PSE&G still trims its distribution circuits on an "inspect and trim where necessary" schedule at least once every four years.

Has the process of notifying municipal officials of PSE&G's tree trimming schedules in municipalities changed?

No. PSE&G will continue to notify municipal officials of our tree trimming schedules and work with them as the schedules are worked.

Who should be contacted if there are questions or concerns about vegetation management?

PSE&G's website (www.pseg.com/treetrim) has a section devoted to Vegetation Management with the necessary contact information.