Important information about

Trees and Power Lines

Trees and vegetation growing too close to power lines are the major cause of unplanned power outages in the Waikato region, particularly in storms. Overgrown trees can also prevent our crews from repairing equipment quickly and delay the process of restoring power.

Managing vegetation within the WEL network area is a shared responsibility between tree owners and WEL with respective obligations set out in the Tree Regulations.* By working together, we can continue to deliver a safe and reliable power supply to our communities.

** Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003.*

Dangers of trees near power lines

If trees or branches come into contact with power lines they can cause damage, widespread outages, and create risk of serious injury or death.

Trees need to be kept at a safe distance from power lines because:

- Children who climb trees close to power lines are at risk of serious injury or death.
- In severe weather, vegetation can become electrically 'live' and may pose an electrocution risk.
- Trees or branches can fall during bad weather, damaging power lines and causing outages.
- Trees close to power lines may cause electrical sparking, resulting in fire.
- Tree roots can grow around underground electricity cables, damaging the insulation and causing power supply failure.

Updated zones

The zones in the Tree Regulations were updated late 2024 to increase the minimum clearances between trees and power lines and a new 'clear to the sky' requirement for some trees was introduced.

There are three zones: the (hazard warning) Notice Zone, Cut-back Zone and Growth Limit Zone (GLZ)* with different clearance distances depending on the power line voltage (Table below).

* While the Growth Limit Zone has increased by one metre, WEL may opt to apply the previous minimum clearance until 16 October 2026.

If your tree is growing within the Notice Zone or Cut-back Zone (Tree A below), you may get a notice saying your tree must be cut or trimmed soon because it's growing too close to power lines.

Should the tree encroach the Growth Limit Zone (Tree B below), you will get a notice requiring it to be cut or trimmed.

Dangers of cutting or trimming trees near power lines

Trimming or cutting trees around power lines is very dangerous and requires specialised skills because such work could result in electrocution or serious injury.

Only qualified utility arborists are permitted to trim a tree within four metres of a WEL power line. This is to ensure your safety and the safety of others, and avoid damage to power lines.

Offences and liability

You must respond appropriately if you receive a cut or trim notice for a Growth Limit Zone encroachment.

Failure to comply (without reasonable excuse) with the cut or trim notice, or to advise us at least 3 working days before such work commences, can result in a fine of up to $10,000 (plus $500 per day/part day where the offence continues).

In addition, if WEL's power lines are damaged because you have not complied with the Tree Regulations, we may be able to recover the cost of repairs from you.

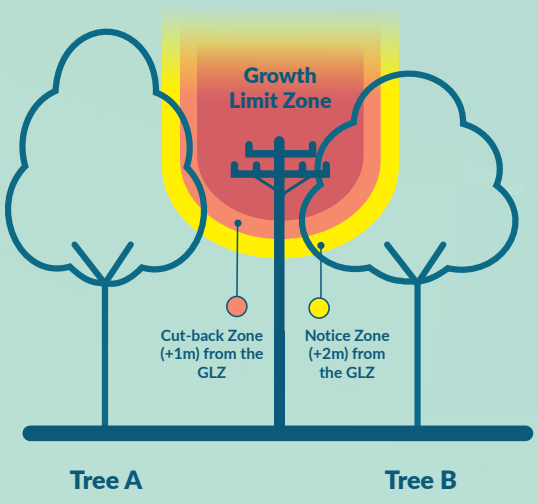
Stay safe

Property owners are responsible for any trees on their property, so it's important to check trees or hedges regularly and take appropriate action if they do pose a risk.

For more information about the Tree Regulations, check out our website or give us a call.

If you observe vegetation across our network which is close to power lines, please contact us.

Clear to the sky



In the diagram shown:

1. These distances are from the power line, not the power pole
2. These distances are a minimum and apply in all conditions including high wind
3. In most instances the power lines that go to a house or building are low voltage power lines
4. Power lines that go down a street may be low or high voltage
5. For spans greater than 150 metres additional clearances apply
6. Trees protected by district plans are excluded from the 'clear to the sky' requirement

Line Voltage	Growth Limit Zone	Cut-back Zone	Notice Zone
Low voltage (230-400V)	0.5m	1.5m	2.5m
High voltage lines (11kV)	1.6m	2.6m	3.6m
High voltage lines (22-33kV)	2.5m	3.5m	4.5m
High voltage lines (110kV or more)	4.0m	5.0m	6.0m

Clear to sky applies for all lines 33kV or greater, plus certain high risk lines at 11 or 22kV.

WEL Networks

wel.co.nz
0800 800 935