

Athens Utilities Board

<b>Division of Power – Policies and Procedures Manual Standard Policies and Procedures</b>	
<b>Policy Number – AUB-03</b>	<b>Revision Number: 4</b>
<b>Subject Tree Trimming</b>	<b>Effective Date: 10-01-2009</b>
	<b>Superintendent Approval:</b>
	<b>General Manager Approval:</b>

**1.0 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to standardize Athens Utilities Board’s (AUB) approach to tree trimming to provide for reliable service, control costs and for the safety of the general public.

**2.0 SCOPE**

This policy applies to all new and existing customers within the AUB electrical service area.

**3.0 REFERENCES**

- (1) Athens Utilities Board, Division of Power, Rules and Regulations
- (2) American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300, Standard Practices for Trees, Shrubs and other Woody Plant Maintenance

**4.0 GENERAL**

Any exceptions to this policy will be made at the sole discretion of the Board’s local control authority.

All trimming will be done in accordance with recognized and approved principles of modern arboriculture and tree surgery as specified in ANSI standard A300.

**5.0 DEFINITIONS**

**AUB** – means the Athens Utilities Board, and its duly authorized employees, agents, and representatives

**Board** – means the Chairman and all Commissioners but does not include any employees

**Customer** – Any person, business, or other entity that receives electrical service from Athens Utilities Board, Division of Power

**Division** – The Athens Utilities Board, Division of Power

**Local Control Authority** – Superintendent of Power or duly authorized representative

**kWhr** – Kilowatt-hour, the measurement by which the applicable power rate is purchased

**Service Connection** – Shall mean the point of connection between the customer’s termination point (weather head or meter center) where AUB makes the physical connection to his/her facilities.

## **6.0 POLICY/PROCEDURES**

### **6.1 General Safety**

Customers should remember to look up and look out for power lines when working outdoors. Coming into contact with power lines can cause serious injury or even result in death.

Customers should stay away from power lines when using aluminum ladders, tree trimming equipment, pool skimmers, poles for harvesting fruit or other tools that extend above the head. Metal conducts electricity. Customers will receive a dangerous electric shock if holding a metal pole or ladder that comes into contact with power lines.

The customer should not trim trees that have power lines going through them or that are directly touching power lines or those that have fallen onto power lines. For the health and beauty of the tree and the safety of the customer, AUB recommends contacting a licensed, professional arborist to trim and maintain trees.

### **6.2 Proper Tree Location**

Planted in the right place, a tree can add beauty and value to your home and make your community a nicer place to live. In the summer, trees shade your house from the sun and reduce the temperature indoors. In the winter, trees act as windbreakers, shielding your home from cold winter winds.

However, if planted under or near power lines, trees can be a deadly hazard. Children and adults playing or working in trees that come in contact with power lines can be seriously or even fatally shocked.

Before a tree is planted, make sure the location is out of the way of overhead and underground power lines and other utilities, as required by Tennessee State Law. For AUB's help locating underground lines in the prospective planting area, call **Tennessee One Call at 811**. AUB has compiled a list of tree species that should be avoided and those that are recommended if trees are to be planted near power lines.

#### **Trees to Avoid (planting under/near power lines):**

- Ash
- Elm
- Mulberry
- Locust
- Walnut
- Cottonwood
- Jacaranda
- Oak
- Poplar

**Recommended Trees:**

Crape Myrtle  
Carrot Wood  
Birch  
Japanese Black Pine  
Cherry  
Flowering Pear  
Purple-leaf Plum  
Japanese Maple  
Bottle Brush  
Golden Rain Tree  
Dogwood

**6.3 Trimming Methods**

AUB adheres to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300, Standard Practices for Trees, Shrubs and Other Woody Plant Maintenance. This standard, endorsed by the International Society of Arboriculture, the National Arbor Day Foundation and the National Arborist Association, requires tree-trimmers to cut branches back to the “parent limb.” This practice allows the pruning cuts to “heal” more rapidly, reducing the chances of insect and disease damage, and promotes a healthier regrowth of branches that are directed away from the power lines.

Pruning considerations include: species of tree, growth and regrowth rates, location of trees in proximity to power lines, voltage of power lines, type of power-line construction, length of pruning cycle, natural tree shape and branching pattern, general tree condition, appearance after pruning and tree-owner input.

To reduce damage to trees, AUB uses “directional pruning” techniques instead of the old method of topping off or rounding over trees. Giving trees a “crew cut” by using the rounding over method destroys the tree’s natural shape, and branches cut back to stubs often decay or die. The directional technique, favored by tree-care specialists, involves cutting out the branches that affect power lines, rather than trimming them back.

Directional pruning may give the tree a lop-sided crown or a V-shaped gap in the treetop, but it causes less stress to the tree and may allow the tree to reach normal heights, even if it is directly under the utility line. Directional pruning also reduces the wounds to the tree from frequent pruning.

Below are illustrations of the types of trimming that AUB will perform. The style used depends on how the tree is placed in relation to the power line, and the type of tree that is being trimmed.



In V-cutting, branches are pruned back toward the center of the tree crown.



Side-trimming prunes back branches on the side of the tree.



L-trimming prunes branches to create a “L-shape” in the upper tree crown so power lines can pass to the side and above the tree.

Tree trimming activities will involve a minimum clearance of 15 feet between the tree branches to the closest power line. Limbs overhanging lines will be trimmed as high as possible. All efforts will be made to eliminate weak, diseased and dead limbs above the wires that have the potential to fall or blow into electrical wires.

AUB uses the “natural trimming” method for tree trimming activities. It is called natural trimming because branches are pruned back to a natural point of growth in the crown of the tree. Natural trimming is healthier than tree “topping”, which is the indiscriminate cutting back of tree branches to reduce the size of the tree crown. Although topping generally leaves the tree with a more uniform or balanced appearance, this technique causes stress to trees, making them more vulnerable to insect and disease infections and causes decay.

#### **6.4 AUB Tree Trimming Practices**

Provision of right-of-way easements grant AUB the authority to trim trees without property-owner permission to provide for a safe and reliable electric system. However, AUB respects the property of its customer-owners 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.

AUB recommends the complete removal of trees that will require extensive trimming on a regular basis. However, trees will not be removed without the property owner’s permission.

To assure proper tree trimming and removal, AUB uses professional tree-trimming firms. It is essential that tree trimming be done properly to ensure dependable electric service and to provide for the welfare of the trees on your property.

The premises of the property where tree-trimming activities were performed by AUB crews or crews contracted by AUB, will be left in the same condition as before the trimming to the extent possible. Crews will chip brush and small limbs. All other wood will be left on the property owner’s premises. AUB is not responsible for cutting wood to size or piling brush.

When possible AUB will give two to four weeks advance notice in an area to be trimmed.

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 AUB personnel.
5. Reports from customers indicating potential tree/power-line problems.

Customers requesting tree-trimming services from AUB should contact **745-4501** and ask to speak to a Customer Service Representative.

#### **6.4.1 Customer Service Lines**

Trees around service drops (the lines running to the customer's house) are the customer's responsibility. For the customer's convenience and safety, AUB crews will lower those lines at the customer's request (Monday through Friday, barring holidays) so that the customer may remove or trim a tree near them.

#### **6.5 Customer Tree Trimming Practices**

Customers have the option of arranging for an independent contractor at their expense to trim their trees to AUB specifications prior to AUB contract crews trimming their neighborhood.

AUB will assist property owners and/or their commercial contractors, at their request, with the trimming and removal of trees that are near AUB electrical wires. An AUB representative will make an inspection and explain to the property owner or contractor what AUB can do to assist when a tree-trimming request is received. AUB's assistance may include one or both of the following activities:

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