AMERICAN TRANSMISSION COMPANY[LLC]
THE ENERGY ACCESS COMPANY

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Routine right-of-way maintenance

American Transmission Company is responsible for maintaining more than 8,600 miles of transmission line right-of-way. This maintenance – which includes inspecting, trimming and removing trees and other vegetation – occurs throughout the year.

The purpose of a strict right-of-way maintenance program is to clear trees and shrubs from the corridor that have the potential of interfering with the safety of people near our equipment as well as to ensure the safe and reliable transmission of electricity. This practice also provides clear and safe access by authorized utility workers to inspect and maintain the transmission facilities.

An important component of ATC's vegetation management program is regular inspection and monitoring of the right-of-way vegetation. These inspections include:

- Observation and recording of vegetation conditions that may affect line operation and maintenance
- Identifying the location of any danger trees adjacent to the transmission corridor
- Identification of any trees which may come in contact with the line when it sags or the trees grow.

Recommendations are made based on these inspections for specific management options. Adopting a viable maintenance program is part of ATC's overall commitment to respecting the environment. Any time vegetation is cleared, the immediate impact is stark. It can appear that the clearing is the manifestation of a lack of care for natural habitat on the part of the organization responsible. ATC understands and appreciates such concerns. We know that transmission lines in general and maintaining safe rights-of-way specifically require modification to natural habitats. We are committed to minimizing the impact of our operations on the natural environment. That is why we work hand-in-hand with environmental specialists who ensure our practices are appropriate.

For more information on our environmental commitment, please see our Web site at www.atcllc.com.

ATC's environmental commitment at work

Much of the routine maintenance work done along transmission rights-of-way involves trimming and clearing to remove incidental tall growing trees within the corridor as well as the removal of overgrown invasive plants. While not directly interfering with our transmission wires, the dense growth of these plants severely limits our access to our equipment. Our goal is to maintain good access and a clear "wire zone" around our facilities. This allows us access to inspect and maintain our transmission facilities, keeps

the fast tall growing trees from being hidden within and is consistent with the Department of Natural Resources initiative to remove invasive plants. Depending on the type and amount of brush within any given area, use of a tractor mower instead of manual chain saw clearing may also be used to reduce or eliminate invasive plants.

The removal of invasive species along our transmission corridors is consistent not only with our responsibility to maintain a safe right-of-way, but also with our goal of minimizing the impact of transmission on the environment. The most common invasive plants found along our rights-of-way are predominately a combination of buckthorn and exotic honeysuckles. Both of these plants are considered invasive in Wisconsin and they tend to out-compete our native plants. Both have longer growing seasons than Wisconsin's native vegetation, giving them the opportunity to remove more than their fair share of nutrients and water from the soil, thus depriving native plant species. These invasive plants shade our indigenous plants before they have a chance to grow. Buckthorn and exotic honeysuckles overrun natural habitats, agricultural lands and waters and reduce biodiversity while burdening our economy with billions of dollars in crop losses and expanded control.

Removing these invasive plant species from transmission corridors will allow low-growing native vegetation to quickly re-establish in these areas and will improve biodiversity along the right-of-way. Allowing native vegetation to return will provide better habitat for birds and other animals and will improve the ecological balance in the vicinity of the right-of-way.

For more information on invasive plants, their negative effect on the environment and how to manage and remove them, please see the following Web sites:

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/invasive/index.htm

Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin - http://www.uwex.edu/ces/ipaw/

The Nature Conservancy Invasive Species Team - http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/index.html

Federal Interagency site - http://www.invasivespecies.gov/index.shtml

Bureau of Land Management Environmental Education Homepage - http://www.blm.gov/education/weed/weed.html

Q&A – Vegetation Management

What is American Transmission Company?

American Transmission Company is a utility company formed in 2000 to own, maintain and operate the electric transmission system. Wisconsin-based companies – including municipally-, cooperatively-, and investor-owned companies divested their transmission assets to ATC in exchange for an investment in the new company.

Why does ATC have the right to trim or remove trees near transmission lines?

Ownership of the transmission lines includes the responsibility to ensure the lines operate safely and reliably. Transmission lines are typically sited on an easement. This easement provides a corridor of safety for those near the transmission facilities, protecting people and structures from the high voltage lines. The easements allow ATC to carry out its responsibility to trim, cut down and remove trees and overhanging branches within the corridor. When homeowners buy property with transmission lines on the property, they are buying the property with the easements in place.

What is a power line easement?

When building a power line, utilities typically acquire easements rather than buy the property. An easement grants a utility the right to build, operate and maintain a power line. Landowners retain ownership of their property, but its use is restricted. The right-of-way must generally be clear of trees and structures that could interfere with a power line.

Why is it important to keep trees away from transmission lines?

Safety is the most important reason why trees near transmission lines must be properly maintained. Tall growing trees pose a threat to children who like to climb. A child in Port Washington was seriously burned recently when she climbed a tree and came in contact with an adjacent power line. Trees that grow into or blow into transmission lines have been known to catch fire through contact. Additionally, service reliability can be affected by tall-growing trees. Tree contact with transmission wires will take the line out of service, which can cause widespread power outages.

Why not trim tall trees just below the wires or far enough below that a child could not reach the line?

In essence, tree-trimming practices are handled by evaluating how far below the wires vegetation must be maintained to ensure continued safety. However, additional factors must be taken into account:

- **Safety zone** – A significant amount of clearance is necessary to achieve a safe zone. A conservative interpretation of the Wisconsin State Electrical Code requires a minimum clearance of 10-15 feet between the line and anything else, based on line voltage.
- **Growth rate and trimming cycle** – We want to ensure the safety zone is maintained not only at the moment we trim, but after we trim, too, until we return for the next trimming cycle. This is typically five to seven years.
- **Transmission line sag** – As power lines carry more load, they heat up. When the wires heat up, they sag more. Consequently, the greatest sag can be expected on hot summer days with high electricity use. Tree trimming is planned such that after maximum growth between trimming cycles and with maximum sag, an adequate safety zone is still maintained.