

BELL SYSTEM PRACTICES
Outside Plant Construction
and Maintenance

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TREE PRUNING
PUBLIC RELATIONS

Contents	Page
General	1
Public Interest in Trees	2
Tree Interference	3
Permits	3
Safety Practices	4

1. GENERAL

1.01 The purpose of this section is to outline, in a general way, the policies which should govern employees engaged in pruning trees in dealing with the public, property owners, tree wardens, commissions, etc.

1.02 The function of the telephone company is to provide satisfactory and dependable service at a minimum cost. Many factors enter into the solution of this problem, one of which is tree interference, a most frequent cause of circuit interference in many sections of line.

1.03 Poor service or loss of service means lack of satisfactory communication, both in normal times and in times of emergency. To the telephone subscriber who may also be an owner of trees, line trouble means poor telephone service to himself, poor service to his neighbors, loss of news service and lack of emergency service in times of disaster. Contact between the wires and the branches of trees should therefore be prevented whenever possible.

1.04 The cost of pruning trees to clear telephone wires where consideration is given to their appearance and welfare is no greater than where the work is done in a haphazard manner with the idea only of clearing the wires, on the other hand, the effect upon the public and the owner in the pro-

motion of good will is of great value, particularly in connection with the securing of future pruning rights.

2. PUBLIC INTEREST IN TREES

2.01 With the growth of towns and cities there is, in general, a decrease in the number of trees in those localities, resulting in greater appreciation by the public of the value of the existing trees. In many localities commissions or tree wardens have been elected or appointed to protect and preserve these trees so that pruning rights can be obtained by only those qualified to perform the work.

2.02 The increasing use of automobiles, together with the improvements in highways, has brought about a program of beautifying the roadside. Contributing to this are the trees along the side, which, whether or not affected by a telephone line, require care and pruning to preserve their natural beauty and health. State and county forestry commissions or wardens are cooperating with state road commissions and highway beautifying commissions to attain those conditions that are most pleasing to the public.

2.03 The warden or tree commission is interested in maintaining the health of the trees and in preserving their beauty. In this connection it is possible that full consideration may not be given to the problems of the Telephone Company. An example of this is planting trees and shrubbery along the roadside, some of which may grow into the telephone lines. In such cases it should be brought to the warden's attention that slow growing trees which can be pruned without serious disfigurement, such as Norway Maple, low growing shrubs that can readily be obtained locally or ornamental shrubs such as Spiraea or Japanese Barbery, may answer the purpose equally as well and in the future will not be a source of trouble to the Telephone Company.

2.04 The diminishing supply of timber available has also created public interest. This phase of the matter is being studied by the wood conservation commission, whose primary interest is in protecting and preserving the forests and promulgating the planting of young trees on land that has been cleared.

2.05 The Telephone Company recognizes that all these commissions serve a good purpose and therefore proposes to do everything possible to further the improvement work. This can best be accomplished through the cooperation of the Bell System employees who are in direct contact with the work being performed and are trained in the use of scientific tree pruning methods.

2.06 Telephone lines are located, to a large extent, along the highways and in this location the results of maintenance work are subject to the constant inspection of the traveling public. This inspection is becoming more critical as a result of information now being disseminated.

2.07 The Telephone Company appreciates its responsibility to the owner and to the community for maintaining the good appearance of the tree and for preserving its health. It is also responsible for furnishing communication and to do this must secure adequate clearance for the telephone wires. To discharge all of these responsibilities, only trained and experienced workmen should be assigned to perform the tree pruning work.

3. TREE INTERFERENCE

3.01 Trees interfere with the construction and maintenance of such telephone plant as drop wire, open wire, and aerial cable. It is with the drop wire and open wire plant that most of the pruning problems arise, although it is necessary to perform a certain amount of pruning work for the clearance of aerial cables. In addition, considerable tree work is encountered in connection with clearing right-of-way for both aerial and underground toll cables.

4. PERMITS

4.01 To care for the interests of the telephone companies in tree pruning work along highways, it is, in general, necessary to secure the consent of the city, county or state tree warden or commission as well as the consent of the property owner before work is started.

4.02 In general, the necessary pruning permits will be secured in advance of the work and forwarded to those in charge. Never prune trees unless the required permits have been secured. If the permits have not been received, discuss the matter with your supervisor. If instructed to obtain right-of-way or permits secure them from either the property owner, tree warden or other authority having jurisdiction over the trees.

4.03 Foremen are occasionally called upon to obtain right-of-way on account of the good relations that have been established with the property owners. It is well to maintain these relations, as these people are in position to report unsatisfactory conditions at some later date and thus assist the company in carrying out a preventive maintenance program. When obtaining right-of-way for work involving tree pruning the property owner should be informed of the extent of tree pruning and told just how the work will be done.

4.04 Conduct yourself in areas requiring pruning privileges so that future permits can be readily obtained. This requires that the pruning be of a scientific nature and when the trees are publicly owned with full cooperation of the warden or commission.

4.05 Secure the consent of the property owner or authorized agent before cutting or pruning any trees. In case the company has previously acquired a right-of-way for the line, including the pruning privileges, advise the owner or his representative of the intention to prune, before work is started. Should the property owner or his representative refuse to permit the pruning, all reasonable efforts should be made to overcome his objections and at the same time retain his good will.

4.06 If there is any doubt on the part of the property owner as to the type of work that will be done, the Pruning Practices should be used as a reference to illustrate to him the practices being followed and quality of pruning to be expected. It should, however, be made clear to the property owner that illustrations in the practices represent in a number of cases ideal conditions and that a first or second pruning may not result in as shapely a tree as pictured. The shape, however, is secondary to the health of the tree and every effort should be made to do the work in a careful and scientific manner.

4.07 When it is known that it will be difficult to secure permission to prune, it usually will be found better to approach the property owner for pruning privileges during the dormant season.

4.08 In dealing with a property owner it is possible that a discussion on one of the following subjects may be of interest to him. If so, develop this interest, as it may aid in securing the necessary consent for pruning trees.

- (a) The pruning of fruit trees with a view toward improving the yield.
- (b) The tools provided the employees in order that a scientific job can be performed.
- (c) Referring to completed jobs nearby that have proved satisfactory to the property owner and public officials.

5. SAFETY PRACTICES

5.01 When working along the highways place warning signs in advance of the work in order to safeguard the public and the employees. In some cases it may be desirable to designate an employee to control traffic instead of depending on a sign to provide sufficient warning.

5.02 Observe the following precautions when pruning trees:

- (a) Keep highways clear of branches.
- (b) Protect sidewalks, fences, garages, lawns, etc., against damage from falling branches or trees.
- (c) When felling trees or removing large branches keep the public from entering the area in which the tree or branches are likely to fall.
- (d) When burning branches and brush take precautions and guard against the fire spreading beyond control.
- (e) Do not leave sharp edged tools where the public is likely to come in contact with them.
- (f) When chopping, see that bystanders are out of the range of flying chips.