

## Trees and Power Lines Can Co-exist

When tree branches come into contact power lines, outages often result. That happens most often in windy, stormy weather. Idaho Power estimates that up to 30 percent of all electrical outages in its service area are caused by trees falling onto power lines or tree limbs contacting power lines. Falling trees and limbs can cause high voltage wires to break or sag to the ground, in some cases causing life-threatening situations for motorists and pedestrians. Overgrown trees near power lines pose an additional risk to children, who could touch a live power line while climbing the tree.

These are the reasons that Idaho Power clears its lines on a regular maintenance cycle and hires qualified line-clearing contractors for the job. These crews know how to create the necessary line clearance, while considering the tree's species, size, and natural shape. Different shapes, sizes, and growth rates determine how often trees need to be trimmed. The crews use the *directional* or *natural* pruning method, which is recommended by the U.S. Forest Service as well as by the International Society of Arboriculture. Use of this method trains the tree to grow away from power lines by removing only the branches that come in contact with the wires. By selectively trimming the tree's branches, much of its natural crown is retained.

Though *directional* pruning or *natural* pruning isn't aesthetically pleasing, it is best for the health of a tree planted near electrical lines. Much pruning can be avoided by planting the right tree in the right place. Think before you plant a tree: That beautiful oak or spruce will do much better planted away from overhead lines.

If your landscaping plans call for a tree near electric lines, choose a low-growing variety. Some ideal trees to plant under power lines are Eastern Redbud, Mt. St. Helens Plum, Golden Rain Tree, and several varieties of Hawthorne and Flowering Crabapple.

If you want help choosing a tree, ask your local Idaho Power office for their Tree Selection Guide, consult your local nursery, or get a copy of the Tree Commission's *Tree Selection Guide*.

If you notice a tree interfering with power lines, please call 1-800-488-6151. Never attempt to trim a tree near power lines yourself.