

Butte Fire Safe Council FAQs for PG&E

Q: (had about 10 people ask about this topic)

Maybe he can explain all the different tree markings. Are they being trimmed, removed or what?

- Removals are marked with an X
- Trims for compliance are marked with a dot.
- Double dots indicate trims listed due to health issues or defects.
- The various colors of paint are dependent on program and year.
 - Routine cycles through orange, green, and white.
 - Yellow - Mid-Cycle and Enhanced Vegetation Management
 - Pink - Estimating Arborists and System Hardening (these programs help with construction planning)
 - Blue - Cal OES/FEMA

Q:

Are they going to work one area at a time instead of jumping around and nothing gets done 100%?

Unfortunately, we are required to jump around in some situations. We have to wait on permitting from Caltrans, USFS, BLM, Counties, and various other agencies which causes delays in some of the required work. There are also continuous changes to scope and scheduling of some of our projects based on risk ratings which can interrupt our schedules. All work that is listed is tracked in our system and will be completed; we just have constraints that do not allow us to complete everything at the same time.

Q:

I would like to know why they have cycled through so many contract companies to do tree work in and around power lines

We utilize multiple contractors due to the amount of work that we need to complete. No single company has the capability of handling all of our tree work and inspections for all of our programs.

For the trees that have been marked for 2 years; we had system hardening and enhanced vegetation management (EVM) projects that started in your area, but they were rescheduled due to risk ranking. This may also be the cause for delay in removing the tree mounted lines. Unless, the tree connect is in dead, dying, or has defects that may cause failure there will continue to be a delay in that work. The EVM program will eventually be restarted, we just do not have it currently on the schedule.

Q:

HERE IS A QUESTION FOR PG & E ; WHY IS THE VEGETATION UNDER POWERLINES NOT BEING CLEARED. IF I RECALL THERE USED TO BE A FIRE CODE REQUIREMENT AS SUCH, AND I BELIEVE IT WAS 10 FOOT EITHER SIDE OF THE DROP (DRIP?) LINE.

We perform work to meet the scope required by CPUC, G.O. 95, and PRC 4293. This is to ensure safe clearance around the lines. We do not do ground clearing on distribution lines except for our Veg Control pole clearing program that requires 10-foot clearance to bare dirt at the base of poles with specific equipment.

Q:

I have had no less than 10 different people come and look at our pole, which is not even in compliance as far as the arms go. Enough looking...let get these new poles with new arms in. Why does it take 10 different people to look at the same pole; just get it done.

Changing construction of a pole takes planning across multiple lines of business which is what leads to multiple visits and reviews. Vegetation Management does not have any say in the scheduling of construction work, we just ensure that all vegetation will remain in compliance with the new construction.

Q:

I have a drop that has been on my tree since 1977. PG&E came and staked an area where a new pole would be placed since a drop can't be on a tree anymore. Fortunately, I was home and asked the PG&E employee (it was not a sub-contractor) if they were going to scan the ground for underground lines (such as electrical or water). PG&E said since there is no natural gas service or buried electrical service in Forest Ranch, they were not going to scan the ground. What PG&E didn't know is my 220volt line and water line run where they were going to drop the pole and goes onto my neighbor's property where I have an easement to my well. Why isn't PG&E scanning the ground to ensure there are not PRIVATE water lines or PRIVATE electrical lines?

I believe the individual you spoke with must have been misinformed. PG&E should be scanning for anything underground prior to any digging.

Q:

PG&E pruned ALL the branches off the wire side of a 30" pine. Since those branches feed that side of the tree and there were none, and, due to the drought the tree died. 2 months ago, beetles swarmed the tree killing it and then spread to 11 other large pines killing them. PG&E cut down 7 trees near the wires and removed the brush which we appreciated. However, during drought years this seems to be an unacceptable practice. Will they continue this practice?

Unfortunately, we cannot avoid trimming just because of the drought conditions. If a tree is going to encroach on the lines or has defects that pose a risk, we must work the tree. During drought conditions, fire risk is increased and leaving risks behind is an unacceptable practice. If a pre-inspector feels that the scope of the work will kill a tree, they will speak with the property owner about fully removing the tree.

Q:

There is a tendency to leave small topped (less than 20 Foot) conifers under the wires. During a fire they may burn and melt the wires?

Our first goal is to ensure all vegetation is in compliance and has enough clearance to stay in compliance until the next inspection. We do push to remove smaller trees when the opportunity arises, but we do not have blanket authorization to remove every tree that we top. We work with property owners and agencies to remove what we can when we can.

Q:

There is also a tendency to treat all tree species similarly. However, a dogwood tree is much less flammable than a conifer or a Tanoak. Can pruning policies be adjusted to address this?

Our pruning practices are not species specific. We base our pruning on the observed growth rate of the tree and its proximity to the lines as well as any health issues or defects identified. Our minimum clearance when we trim a tree in high fire threat districts is 12 ft and will increase from there based on the growth rate to ensure annual compliance.

Q:

In spite of the fact that leaving stubs on trees is generally recognized as a bad practice and leads to extra maintenance and can lead to tree mortality PG&E crews leave stubs, witness a large oak by my house with a 5 foot stub which has been pruned 3 or 4 times. When will this practice cease?

This is an ongoing issue that we are working on with our tree contractors with help from our quality control teams.

Q: It seems if your plan will be to convert existing overhead power lines to underground why would you not simultaneously make incentives for new power to also be put underground to save you the cost of doing it down the road? Just seems like a good option to consider putting into place right away.

PG&E has announced that there will be an increase in undergrounding lines in our high fire threat districts. I do not have much detail on this as I do not work closely with construction.

Q:

Hi, we have lived on crown point 20 years now. Each PGE contractor is different. A couple of years a crew drug everything they cut and hid it further away from the road. My husband had to pull 3 truckloads out that we burned. I don't care for graffiti paint on our trees, so they use flagging now. I would like to ensure each contractor chip as much as possible and don't leave dried kindling piles or hide cuttings.

Some wood management is dependent on access. If our crews cannot get a chipper to the location, they will lop and scatter brush. If there is access, at a bare minimum all brush 4 inches in diameter should be chipped and hauled unless the property owner requests that we leave it. If our crews leave a mess behind, please call 1-800-PGE-5000 to create a customer help case for vegetation management. These help cases will go to our pre-inspectors to review the locations to determine which program performed the work and schedule required clean-up. Any wood management for limbs larger than 4 inches in diameter is dependent on the program that performed the work and safety or environmental considerations.