



**FREESTATE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

The Outlet

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NOTICE

REMINDER: Please note that as of **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2023**, solar applications are limited to parallel generation only. FreeState has met the limit of distributed generation per FreeState's net metering tariff.

GUEST COMMENTARY

Keeping the Right-of-Way Clear — With Science

It's spring storm season, and one thing we've learned is that trees and weather don't always mix. Part of providing reliable power to our members involves line clearance and FreeState does that with in-house right-of-way crews. These crews are an essential part of keeping the lights on, and you'll learn more about that in the next pages. We want to highlight one specific tool in our arsenal for vegetation management.

As part of the right-of-way clearance program, FreeState tree crews have started using a Tree Growth Regulator (TGR) Paclobutrazol program. While fairly new to the co-op, it is an established practice with a solid history in the line clearance industry.

When applied, TGR can lengthen the amount of time between trim cycles of valued trees in our area landscape helping to keep the lines clear even longer.

How Does It Work?

Tree growth is regulated by the hormone, gibberellin. TGR inhibits the production of gibberellin that promotes the lengthening of new cells produced at the ends of twigs. Even with the application of TGR, cell production still occurs, but they do not elongate. Instead, the same number of leaves

and new growth points are packed into a much shorter length. By shortening the growth near energized conductors, the tree can remain without causing an issue with reliability.

Can It Hurt My Tree?

TGR is slow moving when applied to the soil and the impact on any neighboring vegetation is miniscule. What you may see at the base of the tree is grass or flowers with shorter growth, too.

What is most noticeable after application is the reduction of overall new leaf size with a slightly darker color. The darker color is a rich green due to the concentration of chlorophyll in the smaller leaves. This color change is an indication that the leaves are continuing to feed the tree.

Stimulation of root growth can also be observed in treated trees. Fine root



Randy Wager, FreeState's Right-of-Way Superintendent, is this month's guest columnist. Wager is a certified arborist and certified applicator in the state of Kansas.

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Clearing the Way for

Reliability

FreeState's right-of-way department works diligently to help power be delivered safely to your home

Keeping the lights on in your home takes more than a lineman. It takes a crew to clear the lines and ensure the power travel safely to your home. The right-of-way department is essential to the cooperative and the services we provide to our members.

Clearing trees can be inconvenient for our members. However, the work that we do to keep the lines clear of vegetation is vital to ensure safe and reliable power to members.

"Nearly 15% of our outages involve trees," said Randy Wager, right-of-way superintendent. "It is in all of our best interest to reduce that number."

FreeState employs in-house tree crews dedicated to right-of-way clearing. Right-of-way crews were established with members in mind as trees can play a frustrating role in the reliability of power and functionality of power lines. The crews work on vegetation management across our

territories and during outages when tree damage must be cleared to make infrastructure repairs.

FreeState's right-of-way department personnel start with a four-year apprenticeship to become a tree trimmer. Over those four years, tree trimmers can work their way up in their careers. If you or someone you know is interested in our apprenticeship program, please head to our careers page at www.freestate.coop/jobs.

Tree Crew Priorities

- ▶ **OUTAGES** — Assisting linemen by clearing areas where trees or tree damage hinder infrastructure. Due to safety reasons, these jobs are always done as safely and as quickly as possible.
- ▶ **REBUILDS** — The tree crew clears areas for linemen to make updates to the infrastructure without any obstacles.

Your Cooperative's Tree Crew



Randy Wager
Right-of-Way
Superintendent***



John Hamm
McLouth Foreman***



Mat Frye
Tree Trimmer***



Danny Mehrhoff
Tree Trimmer



Jeff Werner
Tree Trimmer**



Scott Wright
Tree Trimmer***



Dustin Crotinger
Tree Trimmer ***

▶ **TROUBLE SPOTS** — These are areas that experience frequent outages. The tree and operations crews work together to identify these areas and address issues.

▶ **MEMBER REQUESTS** — Member requests and reports help reduce damages and maintain safety and reliability. Requests are prioritized by the level of danger posed to members, member property or FreeState infrastructure. Therefore, the timeline of a job varies depending on the circumstances.

Why Is Clearing Necessary?

Trees make our communities and neighborhoods beautiful, but power lines and tree limbs are not a good combination. FreeState's distribution lines must be clear to protect the safety of crews and members and ensure reliable power. If you need vegetation management, do not attempt to clear the vegetation on your own. It is best to contact FreeState to report the problem so we can send a crew out to complete the job safely and efficiently.

Pruning Practices

Tree crews prune trees according to industry standards to achieve aesthetic value, as well as prolonged clearance. We look specifically for trees that could interfere with infrastructure like

lines, conductors and substations. In most cases, vegetation that is removed will be ground up on site or chipped. Wood is usually left where the tree was removed.

When pruning or clearing, the cooperative abides by the following procedures:

- ▶ Mark trees with a red ribbon to indicate removal.
- ▶ Remove trees rather than just trimming to the point they appear to be "butchered."
- ▶ Work with members to identify trees they would like to keep. We want to keep lines clear, but also be considerate of the member's requests and property.
- ▶ Prune to keep tree health in mind.
- ▶ Help members choose appropriate trees to plant in the right location.
- ▶ Trim trees up to the meter.
- ▶ Leave the member's property as clean as possible.

Reporting

We work with members as much as we can when it comes to planning tree maintenance. It is important that the cooperative has updated contact information for members, so we can contact you regarding maintenance.

Our tree crew is dedicated full-time to maintaining the FreeState system, clearing debris during outages and taking precautionary and proactive



Each FreeState crew member of the right-of-way department works diligently to keep your lights on.

measures. Each person in our right-of-way department works diligently to keep the lights on and provide reliable service to your home. FreeState isn't just member-owned, we're member driven.

If you have any questions or need your trees trimmed or treated, call our offices at 800-794-1989.



Tyler Meyer
Topeka Foreman*



Derrick Brown
Tree Trimmer



Kyle Fritz
Tree Trimmer



Tanner Bristol
Tree Trimmer



Jarett Klein
1st Year Tree Trimmer



Billy Denzer
Groundsman

*KAA certified arborist
**Pesticide applicator certification

All crew members are certified in CPR, basic first aid and bucket rescue.

Keeping the Right-of-Way Clear — With Science *Continued from page 12A* ▶

density can increase by 60-80% in some oak trees near the base. This increase in root growth, along with an enhanced ability of the leaves to reduce the loss of water during transpiration, has even shown some trees to have elevated drought tolerances.

When TGR is applied at recommended dosage, it has been shown to be very safe, and in fact sometimes beneficial to trees. The use of TGR is evolving from being applied to trees solely as a treatment under utility lines to use by commercial landscapers and arborists because of its growth suppression and other tree health benefits.

What Can I Expect to See During Application?

The application process is simple. If your tree is a candidate for this program, FreeState will set up a time to treat your tree, either before or after trimming. If treatment is done before trimming, the regrowth response of the tree will be reduced. If some regrowth is desirable after trimming, we can delay the treatment so the tree has time to produce some normal growth before being suppressed. This may soften the look of a freshly trimmed tree, particularly if the trimming needed was significant.

During application we will dig a small trench around the base of the tree at the root flare. A premeasured amount of the chemical is mixed with water based on the size and type of tree being treated. This mixture is poured evenly around the base of the tree in this trench until all is absorbed. The dirt is replaced at the base of the tree and treatment is complete.

Following treatment, we will revisit your tree periodically to monitor its growth. Treatment can be expected to last for three years.

How Can I Sign Up?

If you have a tree that you believe is a candidate for the TGR program, contact the office and schedule a visit. I'd be happy to meet with you on-site where we can discuss the possibility of adding you to the list of members taking advantage of this option.

The goal is to reduce trimming valued trees that threaten power reliability and allow them to beautify our area for generations to come.

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SPRING
into **summer**



**Scan the QR code
to register for a
Prize Pack!**

**Powering You
at the
Topeka Zoo!**

**Save the Date
Saturday, Aug. 26**



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Electric Cooperative, Inc.

topeka zoo

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