

## Farmers: look up while planting

- Take notice of our lines running along roads, field edges & at field entrances.
- Always maintain a 10-foot minimum distance (below, above & to each side) from our lines.
- Use a spotter to verify clearance.
- If your vehicle or machinery comes into contact with a power line, do not get out; stay where you are & call 911 to dispatch the appropriate utility to de-energize power.

*safeelectricity.org*



Go paperless for Earth Day this month by enrolling in paperless billing. Visit our online account portal at [menard.com](http://menard.com) and select Account Management/Paperless Options. You will receive an email notification each month when your bill is ready to view.



**BUILT** by our community.  
**SHAPED** by our community.  
**LED** by our community.

**WE'RE PROUD TO  
POWER YOUR LIFE.**

# Vegetation management program improves safety and reliability



**Ross Cloninger**  
Forester

*One of the many ways we seek to continually provide our members with safe and reliable service is through our vegetation management program. Read on for specifics about this year's program.*

## Safety

A tree limb holds moisture, and if it contacts an electric line, that moisture provides a path that can result in electrocution. Even branches that seem far away from lines come into contact from wind, broken limbs or additional weight. We saw clear evidence of how additional weight from snow and ice can affect tree limbs during the New Year's storm this year.

Trees grown too close to our lines are dangerous for our linemen working on the lines, members working in or near trees, and even children playing in or around trees near lines.

## Reliability

Tree limbs contacting lines also cause outages. These can occur during ice and snowstorms as well as during milder days when swaying branches will cause multiple small interruptions difficult for our linemen to locate. Using the New Year's storm again as an example, 62 percent of the outages we had were due to tree contact, primarily in areas that are scheduled to be trimmed this year. It could have been much worse, and we were pleased to see again how our diligence in providing a comprehensive vegetation management program is proving successful. As you read in February's newsletter, outage hours due to tree contacts dropped considerably in 2020. If you missed that article, you can find it at [menard.com/connect-newsletter](http://menard.com/connect-newsletter).

## 2021 Program for vegetation management

Our service territory spans over 2,600 miles of line and controlling vegetation takes time. We seek to clear each area of

our territory every five to six years. This cycle requires us to trim each tree for adequate clearance against regrowth until the next time forestry crews will be in the area. When we cannot achieve adequate clearance the tree will be cut down.

Trees are not the only issue. Bushes and vines that grow on or near poles causes them to rot quicker and prevents linemen from accessing them. Growth under lines prevents access for maintenance and outage repairs.

Consistent trimming and clearing is necessary to prevent safety and reliability issues. Our focus remains on steadily working to keep our lines and equipment clear of any vegetation that presents a hazard.

## Specifications

Our specifications are to clear the area on either side of our single-phase lines at least 15 feet, and three-phase lines at least 25 feet, from the center of the pole. Smaller trees and brush under and close to lines are removed to allow access and eliminate future growing problems.

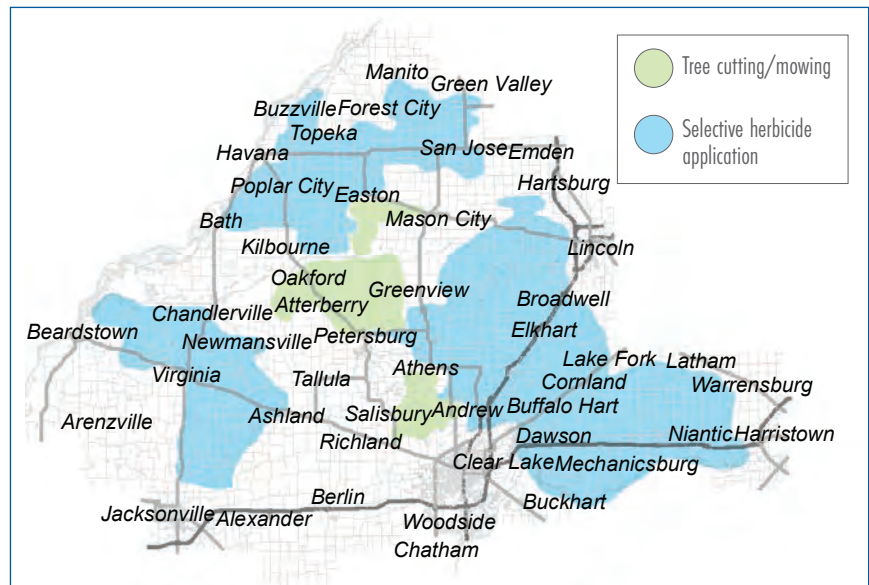
We direct all tree trimming crews to trim to the American National Standards Institute requirements to assure the

continued health of trees. Some members may not view these standards as the most visually appealing, but they are healthier for the tree in the long term as well as being safer for all members and employees.

## 2021 Schedule

We partner with Spoon River Electric Cooperative's forestry department and employ contract crews. Throughout the rest of 2021 these crews will mechanically cut and mow vegetation on circuits shown on the map in green, branching out from our substations in Oakford, Salisbury and southwest Mason City.

In addition to trimming and mowing, contract crews will also selectively apply herbicide to brush as needed in areas that were mechanically cleared in 2020. This allows us to control problematic re-growth, reducing the amount of brush that would need cleared and extending our trimming cycle. This is the most effective and cost-effective method of right of way maintenance. In 2021 this will include the areas shown on the map in blue served by substations in Lanesville, Barclay, Sherman, Middletown, Poplar City, Athens, Allen, Topeka and Virginia.



**We appreciate our members' support of our vegetation management program to help us continue providing safe, reliable service. Questions about our program? Contact Forester Ross Cloninger at [rcloninger@menard.com](mailto:rcloninger@menard.com) or 800-872-1203.**





## Keep poles clear

Bushes and vines growing near or on poles can cause them to rot quicker and prevent linemen from accessing them for maintenance. Also do not attach items such as planters, mailboxes or signs directly to poles.



## Landscaping near transformers

Those green or grey utility boxes sometimes found in yards are part of the supply chain that powers neighborhoods. Do not paint, enhance, plant shrubs or trees near, or otherwise block or obstruct this equipment. We need at least 10 feet of clearance in front of and four feet on the other three sides. Also, always teach children that they should not sit on, open or play around these enclosures.



## Planting trees near overhead and underground lines

**Overhead lines:** Take the diameter of the tree when full grown (available on its care tag or from the nursery), divide that number in half and add 15 or 25. Then plant your tree that many feet away from lines. You want the outer edge of the branches (not the trunk) to be at least 15 feet from single-phase overhead lines or 25 feet from three-phase overhead lines when it is full grown.

**Underground lines:** Tree roots can cause problems for underground utilities. Generally, roots grow out 2-3 times the edge of the branches (drip edge) within just a few years and in some cases, they can grow laterally equal to the height of the tree.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

## Call 8-1-1

If any landscaping projects will involve digging remember to always call JULIE at 811 or visit [illinois1call.com](http://illinois1call.com) two to three days in advance so that all underground utility lines can be marked.



## Planting for efficiency

Leafy trees planted on the south and west sides of your home can provide shade on hot summer days; as leaves fall the sun will warm the home in winter. Evergreen trees placed on the north and northwest sides of a home can provide a year-round windbreak. Shrubs and ground cover planted around a home's perimeter can help reduce heat buildup.

## Board highlights

For full minutes visit [menard.com](http://menard.com)  
or contact the office.

January 26, 2021

- All Directors present in person or remotely; also Manager Anker & Attorney Smith.
- Approved Land Surveying Services Agreement with Tate Surveying & Mapping LLC.
- Approved Wire Transfer Agreement for Alliance Community Bank.
- Adopted Corporation Authorization Resolutions for Alliance Community Bank & CFC.
- Reviewed 2020 accomplishments.
- Anker reviewed monthly & YTD financial operating report, balance sheet & financial trends. Operating margins YTD as of 12/31 were \$1,762,355 compared to \$2,269,313 last year; equity at 41.43%; 12-mo TIER 2.40 & DSC 1.59.
- Reviewed Operations report w/38 incidents; the largest outage affecting 206 members longest outage 293 minutes.
- Ryan appointed delegate & Patrick alternate to NRECA Annual Meeting. McMillan appointed delegate & Goetsch alternate to NRTC Annual Meeting.
- Adopted resolution for General Retirement of Capital Credits of approximately \$809,000 for balance of years 1996/1997/1998 & \$170,000 for estates.

**CONGRATS!**

Director Warren Goetsch is one of 20 directors appointed to a 2-year term on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Director Advisory Group. He will provide NRECA with guidance and feedback about director education programs, conferences, communications and resources.



Employee Favorite

## RECIPES

*Victoria Kennedy*  
Director of Accounting & Finance

### No Bake Cookies

- 2 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/3 cup butter
- 3/4 cup milk
- 3/4 cup cocoa
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
- 3/4 cup peanut butter
- 3 3/4 cups oatmeal

Place sugar, butter, milk and cocoa in large pan and bring to a boil, stirring frequently. Boil fast for one minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and add vanilla, peanut butter and oatmeal. Blend well. Drop by spoonful onto wax paper.

*Victoria says, "Craving chocolate but don't have much time to wait for four dozen cookies to come out of the oven? No problem! No bake cookies can be made quickly and just one pan to dirty!"*



## Energy Efficiency

### Tip of the Month

Some manufacturers set water heater thermostats at 140 degrees, but most households usually only require them to be set at 120 degrees.

Consider lowering your water heater's temperature to save energy and slow mineral buildup in the heater and pipes.

Source:  
[energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

