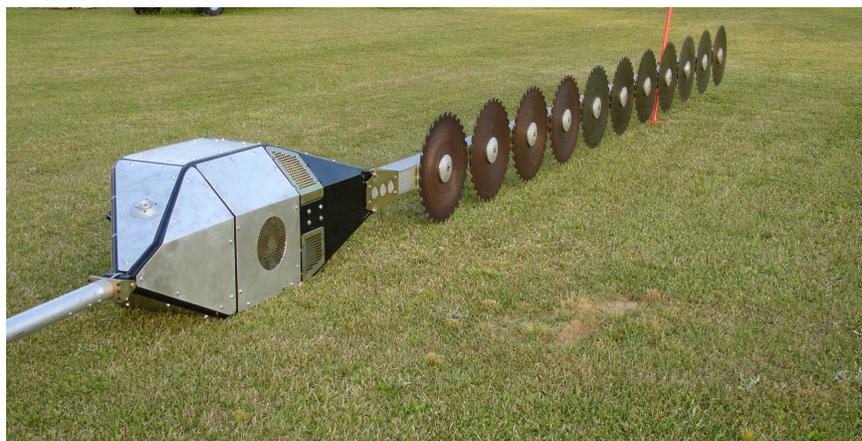


## Aerial Tree Trimming/Aerial Saw Fact Sheet

- FirstEnergy has a comprehensive vegetation management program designed to maintain its transmission rights-of-way (ROW).
  - As part of this program all safety precautions are utilized by FirstEnergy employees and forestry contractors.
- One of the tools available is using helicopters equipped with aerial tree-trimming saws for side-trimming in a portion of the ROW.
  - The helicopter has a saw consisting of multiple 24-inch rotary blades powered by a motor suspended on a vertical boom beneath it.
  - As the helicopter flies slowly along the right-of-way, the aerial saw cuts and trims trees and other vegetation. (*See photos below.*)
  - The saw cuts rapidly and cleanly. Tree limbs 8 to 10 inches are neatly cut without tearing. Tree limbs fall straight down, assisted by the air blasts from the rotors of the helicopter.
  - Aerial saws are in accordance with ANSI A300 tree pruning standards.
- The aerial saw is not a replacement for conventional tree-trimming methods, but it is very effective on hard-to-reach transmission and sub-transmission lines.
  - The aerial saw is not used to trim trees in residential areas unless safety buffers are utilized.
  - We expect the aerial method of tree trimming will help us to extend the length of our tree-trimming cycle in rural areas.
- The trimming is intended to help maintain proper clearances along transmission ROW that normally occurs once every five years.
  - Aerial saw trimming cycles will be 8-10 years depending on the geographic area.
  - Using an aerial saw allows subsequent maintenance work to focus on the removal of “danger” or incompatible trees and proper ROW management.
- FirstEnergy has contracted with Aerial Solutions to perform the work. Aerial Solutions has been performing helicopter ROW trimming and maintenance for more than 25 years. Other aerial saw vendors may be used.





### **What are the benefits of using the aerial saw?**

- The aerial saw eliminates the risk of injury to workers using bucket trucks or climbing trees near energized lines. The aerial saw can be used in remote areas or places inaccessible to a vehicle.
- The aerial saw can perform work quickly, side-trimming both sides of a 10-to-12 mile right-of-way in one week.
- The aerial saw protects private land and roads from damage by heavy equipment making repeated trips during the course of the work schedule.
- The aerial saw is the best tool to use in environmentally sensitive areas since it is not necessary to take equipment in to perform the work.
- The use of aerial saws provides an option to maintain trees that might otherwise need to be removed.
- In the 16 years FirstEnergy has been using aerial saws, they have not been shown to cause abnormal tree mortality when compared to traditional trimming methods. Annual inspections will take place along the corridors where aerial saws have been used to address any tree mortality issues.
- Unlike traditional methods, aerial trimming can reach from the ground to the very top of the tree, without being limited by the reach of a ground vehicle.

### **Will you notify customers prior to trimming?**

- FirstEnergy representatives will notify affected property owners prior to any work being done via door hangers, letters or personal contact.

### **How dangerous is the operation of the saw?**

- The operation is monitored and certified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This certification, as well as the required insurance coverage, is earned only through safe operation of the power saw. The company has been safely using aerial tree-trimming since 1988.

### **What do you do with the limbs from the trees?**

- Brush that has fallen onto access roads, maintained yards, agricultural fields or in streams during the aerial trimming operation will be moved to adjacent wooded areas by a ground crew shortly after the trimming is performed. The ground crew also will identify and remove individual dead trees found along the ROW that potentially threaten the transmission line.

### **Safety tips**

- Observers should stay a safe distance away from the equipment.
- Customers should never trim trees near power lines themselves.

### **General tree clearing talking points**

- FirstEnergy's long-distance, high-voltage transmission lines provide electricity to distribution systems serving approximately six million customers. A key component of maintaining safe and reliable service is keeping the transmission line rights-of-way free of incompatible trees and vegetation.
- As utilities look to enhance reliability and safety, it is important that they enforce existing vegetation management easement rights regarding overhead lines. The removal of trees under high-voltage lines rather than pruning serves to minimize the chance of any vegetation contact that might interfere with the transmission lines.
- FirstEnergy is aware that tree clearing is an emotional issue for property owners – but the work must be done in order to remain in compliance with State and Federal mandates. Such mandates include those of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC), and state Public Utilities Commissions.
- Proper vegetation management does not always involve removal of all vegetation. Compatible trees and shrubs that do not interfere with electric facilities are not disturbed.
- A diverse mixture of grasses, low growing shrubs and other ground cover preferred by birds, deer and small animals promote a thriving wildlife habitat. In this way, well-managed electric rights-of-way provide food and cover wildlife need to survive.