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# June 2026 updates to the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003

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## Guidance

June 2026

## Disclaimer

This explanatory note assists the reader to understand the June 2026 updates to the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003 (the Regulations). It is not a comprehensive guide or independent legal advice and should not be construed as such. Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice if they seek to understand, or rely on, provisions of the final regulations. MBIE is not responsible for the results of any actions taken based on information in this document, or for any errors or omissions.

## The Hazards from Trees Regulations have been updated

In June 2026, the Government updated the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003 (Regulations). The purpose of the Regulations is to protect the security of the supply of electricity, and the safety of the public.

The updates are shown in Figure 1. The amended Regulations come into force on 23 July 2026, with a specific transition period for each of the key changes.

Figure 1. June 2026 updates to the Regulations



## June 2026 updates to the Regulations

### 1. A new Treefall Hazard Notice power

Start date	Effect	Publication requirements
23 July 2028	Lines owners will be able to issue Treefall Hazard Notices for the first time in July 2028. This date is the expiry of the two-year transition period, providing a transition period during which lines owners can choose to survey their lines, and for regulated parties to become familiar with the requirements.	By <b>October 2026</b> (Within three months of the commencement date of the amendment Regulations)

This new power allows lines owners to assess then take action to remove trees that pose a moderate- or high-risk to electricity lines. The power has several features designed to balance the sometimes-competing interests of lines owners and tree owners.

#### *The assessment area – 24 m either side of the Growth Limit Zone*

The area in which a lines owner may exercise the Treefall Hazard Notice power is the treefall hazard zone (TFHZ). This is an area that extends horizontally 24 metres from the edge of the powerline's Growth Limit Zone (GLZ). The GLZ is the non-encroachment zone surrounding conductors (powerlines) in which tree owners must not allow vegetation to grow – its size varies based on the voltage and span length of the powerline. See [Appendix B](#) for a diagram, showing these areas.

If a tree is outside of the TFHZ it may not be assessed for treefall hazard.

#### *Constraints on the exercise of the Notice power*

Lines owners will be able to assess any tree in the TFHZ at their own initiative, including the fall-impact part of the assessment. However, they must take written advice from a suitably qualified and experienced arborist when assessing the likelihood of a tree falling.

The lines owner and arborist must consider the *fall-likelihood* and *fall-impact* factors listed in new Schedule 3 of the Regulations. The lines owner may also take advice from a suitably qualified and experienced forestry advisor where relevant (for example, where the tree is part of a forest).

Following assessment, a lines owner may then issue a Treefall Hazard Notice for trees assessed as moderate- or high-risk to the line.

A Treefall Hazard Notice may be issued for multiple trees to reduce the administrative burden on the lines owner and tree owner. Each tree referred to in the Notice must have been independently assessed for treefall hazard.

### *Obligations on each party*

The reasonable costs of removing the tree, and any associated debris, will generally sit with the lines owner.

The lines owner may also choose to enter the property to remove the tree, with the consent of the tree owner. If this consent is refused, then the lines owner is no longer required to meet the reasonable costs of removal.

As explained in the next section, lines owners will not be responsible for meeting the reasonable costs of removing the tree where the tree has been planted unlawfully in the low height planting zone (LHPZ).

It is the tree owner's responsibility to ensure the removal of the tree within the period specified in the Treefall Hazard Notice.

Trees posing a moderate hazard must be removed within 45 working days, while those posing a high hazard must be removed within 25 working days.

A tree owner commits an offence should they fail, without reasonable excuse, to remove the tree, or to advise the lines owner of the time and location of the tree's removal.

### *Dispute resolution options*

The scope of arbitration under the Regulations will expand to cover disputes about the Treefall Hazard Notice power. There will be two types of disputes that can be taken to arbitration:

- If the lines owner has assessed the treefall hazard as moderate or high and the tree owner wishes to dispute the assessment through the Tree Arbitrator. Tree owners will have 10 working days to make an application to the Tree Arbitrator.
- If the tree owner has removed the tree in accordance with the notice, but the lines owner disputes the reasonable costs of removal. Lines owners will have three months to make an application to the Tree Arbitrator after being invoiced for the reasonable costs of removal.

## 2. A new Low Height Planting Zone (LHPZ)

Start date	Effect	Publication requirements
23 July 2027	Owners or occupiers will not be able to plant trees in the LHPZ unless they have a reasonable belief that the tree will not reach a mature height that exceeds its distance from the line.	By <b>October 2026</b> (Within three months of the commencement date of the amendment Regulations)

The LHPZ is an area 24 metres either side of a powerline that will restrict a landowner/occupier to planting trees that are unable to obtain a height where they could fall on the line at maturity. This creates an area where the closer the tree is to the powerline, the shorter its final estimated mature height can be.

Unlike the TFHZ, the LHPZ extends horizontally 24 metres from a line drawn vertically from the powerline to the ground. This makes the LHPZ easier to interpret for non-commercial landowners, owners of lifestyle blocks, and farm foresters – as the LHPZ will not change between different voltages and spans. An illustrative infographic of the LHPZ has been included in [Appendix C](#).

There are exceptions to this rule. A tree may be planted within the LHPZ if:

- the land is existing forest land as defined in the Regulations
- the land is in an urban area as defined in the Regulations
- the tree is planted as part of a shelter belt, as defined in the Regulations
- the land is administered by any person under the *Conservation Act 1987*.

### *Constraints on the LHPZ's application*

To avoid significantly impacting landowners with existing forests, the LHPZ does not apply to existing forest land. The definition of forest land has been drawn from the *Climate Change Response Act 2002* and the *Forests Act 1949* to ensure that forest subject to the Emissions Trading Scheme is not subject to the Low Height Planting Zone.

Urban areas are also carved out from the application of the LHPZ. Given the high density of low-voltage powerlines in urban areas, the application of the planting restrictions would be unmanageable as they would create large areas where planting tall trees is effectively prohibited. This would have a negative impact on urban greenspaces, where a tree-by-tree approach is preferable to preserve urban amenity, and where trees are managed more intensively.

Shelterbelts have been carved out from the LHPZ requirements in recognition of the many benefits that shelterbelts provide to agricultural activities.

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### *Obligations on each party*

The landowner or occupier must not plant a tree or allow another person to plant a tree that is within the LHPZ, where the landowner or occupier believes on reasonable grounds that at maturity the height of the tree will exceed its distance from the powerline.

Should the landowner or occupier plant a tree in contravention of the Regulations they will be liable for damage arising from the breach, however no new offence is proposed relating to breaches of the LHPZ. To avoid frivolous claims, arbitration will not be available to landowners or occupiers for unlawfully planted trees.

Lines owners' powers to issue cut or trim notices for trees in the LHPZ will remain unchanged. However, they will be able to issue Treefall Hazard Notices to the tree owner for hazardous trees that have clearly been planted in contravention of the LHPZ. In the latter case, the cost of removal falls on the tree owner.

### *Tree owners may not avoid their obligations*

Ordinarily, tree owners can issue a no-interest notice to the lines owner, expressing that they have no-interest in the tree. This process will not be available to tree owners where the tree in question has been planted unlawfully in the LHPZ, or where self-sown trees have established in the LHPZ and then not managed.

Similarly, no dispensations will be available to the tree owner for trees in the LHPZ.

### 3. All non-urban lines included in the ‘clear-to-the-sky’ growth limit zone

Start date	Effect	Publication requirements
<b>17 October 2026</b>	<p>The 2026 amendments extend the ‘clear-to-the-sky’ Growth Limit Zone (GLZ) – which requires vegetation to be kept clear above powerlines – to lines with a voltage of 11 kV or below in non-urban areas.</p> <p>This means all non-urban lines included in the ‘clear-to-the-sky’ growth limit zone.</p> <p>This change extends the Phase 1 amendment (made in 2024) which applied this requirement to lines over 11 kV to prevent vegetation forming a ‘tunnel’ around lines.</p> <p>The change takes effect on 17 October 2026, to align with the end of the transitional period for higher-voltage lines.</p>	<p>By <b>23 July 2027</b></p> <p>(Within one year of the commencement date of the amendment Regulations)</p>

The Growth Limit Zone (GLZ) is the non-encroachment zone surrounding conductors (powerlines) in which tree owners must not allow vegetation to grow. Its dimensions vary depending on the voltage and span length of the line.

Initial amendments to the Regulations (Phase 1) came into force on 17 October 2024 and focused on vegetation in and around the GLZ. One of these amendments introduced a ‘clear-to-the-sky’ GLZ for all lines over 11 kV, primarily targeting transmission and sub-transmission lines. In non-urban areas, this extends the GLZ from a ‘donut’ shape around the line to one that also extends vertically above it.

This change prevents practices such as ‘tunnel trimming’, where vegetation is cut back around the GLZ but allowed to grow above, enclosing the line within a corridor of vegetation.

A vertically extending, vegetation-free zone better protects powerlines from branches falling onto lines from above.

The 2026 amendments extend the Phase 1 ‘clear-to-the-sky’ requirement (confirmed in 2024) to lines of 11 kV or below in non-urban areas. This will take effect from 17 October 2026 so that this change aligns with the Phase 1 implementation dates.

## 4. Modernising publication requirements – focus on online

Start date	Effect	Publication requirements
23 July 2026	These provisions are in force 28-days following notification in the <i>New Zealand Gazette</i> .	N/A

The amendments to the Regulations modernise publication requirements. Previously, the Regulations have mandated that lines owners, alongside publishing on the internet, provide written notices to their consumers, or publish information in two separate editions of a newspaper widely read by their consumers.

With the closure of many local newspapers, and the inefficient and costly nature of providing written notice to every consumer, the Regulations now require annual publications to take place on an appropriate internet site.

To ensure that the coverage of regulatory requirements is comprehensive, lines owners are now required to publish an explanation of the new Regulations online, alongside similar information on wider relevant regulations.

## Appendix A: Glossary

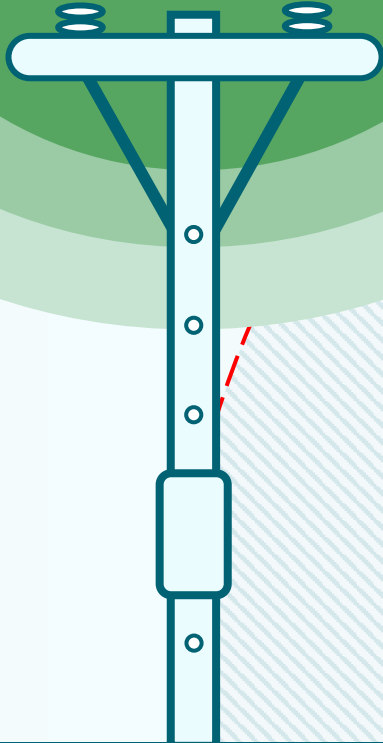
Term	Definition
<b>Growth Limit Zone</b>	The GLZ is the non-encroachment zone surrounding conductors (powerlines) in which tree owners must not allow vegetation to grow – its size varies based on the voltage and span length of the powerline.
<b>Cut-Back Zone</b>	The cut-back zone is an area that extends 1 metre from the GLZ. Trees that encroach the GLZ must be cut back to the cut-back zone unless a dispensation has been made.
<b>Hazard Warning Notice Zone</b>	The hazard warning notice zone (formerly the notice zone) is a zone that extends 2 metres from the GLZ. Trees that encroach the hazard warning notice zone may trigger the lines owner to issue a hazard warning notice alerting the tree owner to the encroachment.
<b>Low Height Planting Zone</b>	In relation to a conductor that is on unforested land outside an urban area, means the space that extends horizontally no more than 24 metres from a vertical plane drawn from any point on the conductor. A landowner or occupier planting in the LHPZ must have a reasonable belief that the tree’s mature height will be less than its distance from the powerline.
<b>Treefall Hazard Zone</b>	The TFHZ extends 24 metres from the GLZ. Trees that are within this zone may be assessed for treefall hazard risk by the relevant lines owner.
<b>Lines Owner</b>	A lines owner is the same as a works owner. These entities include the owner of the national grid, Transpower, as well as distributors like Vector, Powerco, and WEL Networks.
<b>Tree Owner</b>	A tree owner is the person who owns a tree that is captured by any part of the Regulations.
<b>Tree Arbitrator</b>	The Tree Arbitrator is the person, or persons, appointed by the Minister for Energy to resolve certain disputes under the Regulations. There is currently one Tree Arbitrator appointed until 19 July 2028: Mr Bradley Cadwallader Email: <a href="mailto:brad.cadwallader@cropp-place.nz">brad.cadwallader@cropp-place.nz</a>
<b>Utilities Disputes Limited</b>	Utilities Disputes Limited (UDL) is the approved dispute resolution scheme appointed under section 95 of the <i>Electricity Industry Act 2010</i> . UDL may consider matters relating to the Regulations that fall outside the Tree Arbitrator’s jurisdiction.
<b>Dispensation</b>	Dispensations, if granted, ease the requirement for tree owners to trim their trees (from the cut-back zone to the GLZ).



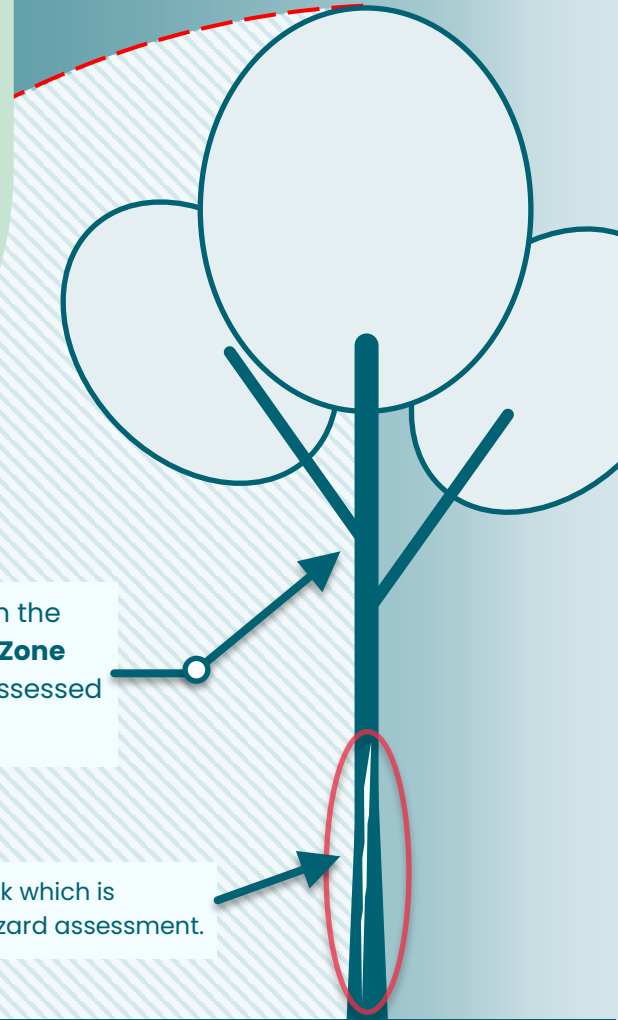
Clear to the Sky

For **all non-urban** lines.

# Growth Limit Zone



While this tree is within the **Treefall Hazard Zone** and may be assessed for fall risk, it is unlikely to be a hazard due to its low height.



This tree is within the **Treefall Hazard Zone** and it may be assessed for fall risk.

This tree has a split trunk which is relevant to a treefall hazard assessment.

Treefall Hazard Zone  
**GLZ + 24m**



**Growth Limit Zone**



**Cut-back Zone (+1m)**



**Hazard Warning Notice Zone (+2m)**

Treefall Hazard Zone  
**GLZ + 24m**



Growth Limit Zone



Cut-back Zone (+1m)



Hazard Warning Notice Zone (+2m)

Clear to the Sky

For all non-urban lines.

Growth  
Limit Zone

Conductor

The **Low Height Planting Zone** extends outwards horizontally, 24 metres from a vertical line drawn from the conductor to the ground.

Practical effect of the LHPZ

Practical effect of the LHPZ

Mature Trees

Mature Trees

Conductor + **24m**

Conductor + **24m**

Low Height Planting Zone

Low Height Planting Zone