



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Bill Prokop, City Manager, 843-525-7000

Beaufort monitors, corrects utility tree-pruning

Although the cuts sometimes look jagged and ragged, utility crews trimming live oaks in Beaufort are following the rules designed to keep the trees healthy.

When improper pruning cuts are seen, certified arborists meet with the utility representatives and the pruning crew to correct the problem, said Eliza Hill, certified arborist for the City of Beaufort.

“Any time the utility begins pruning on a circuit of high voltage power lines, we hear complaints that they are ‘butchering’ the trees and cutting back way too much,” Hill said. “In most cases, that’s not accurate, and in most cases, the crews are doing what’s best for the trees considering the power line requirements for clearance and safety.”

In a 2012 article in the *Charleston City Paper*, Danny Burbage, the City of Charleston’s urban forester, said “utility pruning is almost always going to look unattractive. It just is. But given what they’re charged with, what the crews in Charleston ... have done is pretty much state-of-the-art and as good as it can possibly get.”

Hill agrees, having worked with Burbage. “If you accept that you want and need electricity, and if you accept and understand that for a lot of reasons, mostly financial, the power company is slow to bury lines underground, then we have to deal with power lines and trees,” she said.

“Pruning of trees for line clearance should not be confused with structural pruning. If this pruning did not have to be done for everyone’s safety, trees would never be pruned in this manner,” she said.

South Carolina Electric & Gas prunes by “circuits.” This summer’s circuit included Spanish Point, Ribaut Road, North Street and The Point in Beaufort. Circuits are pruned every five years. SCEG’s crews will be back next year to prune the Pigeon Point circuit for its five-year pruning. “It

sometimes appears as if the utility is pruning more often, which isn't the case. They simply don't prune the entire city at one time," Hill said.

"We value our trees throughout Beaufort. We have entire neighborhoods named for mossy oaks, and certainly our National Historic Landmark District is known for the majestic trees, some of which have stood since the 1800's," Hill said. "We have procedures in place to protect the trees, and while it may not look pretty, standards set by the International Society of Arboriculture are being met."

In the *Charleston City Paper* article, Burbage pointed out that 25 years ago, tree trimmers cut limbs in a way that rounded out the shape of the tree, without the dips and gaps we see today. But, that rounding technique is detrimental to future tree health. It results in leaving open wounds that make the tree more susceptible to rot and weak branching structure.

To read more about the Charleston tree-trimming, which directly relates to concerns voiced by some in Beaufort, read <http://www.charlestoncitypaper.com/charleston/heres-why-the-electric-company-has-been-chopping-your-trees-all-to-heck/Content?oid=4138807> .

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