

## **ROW cutting and Emerald Ash Borer update – 6/1/21**

Every year WEC evaluates our right-of-way (ROW) and EAB mitigation efforts. We are working hard to improve reliability, access, and safety. Our recent efforts are summarized below and are not possible without member support and resources.

Contract tree crews and the WEC forestry mulcher will be working in WEC utility ROW in many areas of the system throughout the summer. We are continuing efforts to trim areas that are “further out” on circuits. Some areas we are targeting in 2021 include: Route 16 in Greensboro, Stannard Mountain Road in Stannard, Lightening Ridge in Calais, Scales Hill in Washington, Maxfield Road and Gore Road in Plainfield. The list is expansive and encompasses nearly every town we serve.

We do our best to inform members of work beforehand, however, there are times when this may not occur. Please be patient with us and understand the crews are there so WEC can improve service reliability and access in these areas.

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WEC developed an Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) mitigation plan in late 2018 to respond to the EAB infestation in Vermont. The plan takes a top-down approach to protect utility infrastructure (substations, transmission, main feeders, single phase lines in or near infested areas).

WEC began removal of ash trees near substations in 2019 and 2020. We cut ash near the transmission line from the Graniteville switch to the Jackson Corner substation. Ash was removed in sections on the East Montpelier to Maple Corners transmission line and on several feeders throughout our system. Ash trees were removed on the Willey Hill Road line from Route 302 to East Topsham.

Moreover, in 2019, we removed over 600 ash that were a danger to WEC utility lines and infrastructure. In 2020, we increased that number to over 2000 ash trees. WEC plans to remove an additional 2000 ash trees in 2021. The ash tree removal program in 2021 is focused in the Plainfield area. However, other areas outside of our East Montpelier substation are targeted as well.

Despite these efforts, an ash tree struck and broke wires on our East Montpelier to Orange feeder on December 25, 2020. This caused approximately 600 members to lose power. The ash tree was severely infected by EAB. Many ash trees in that area are now cut, but more work needs to be done there and throughout our system.

Unfortunately, this is an issue that will affect us for a decade or more.