



## SEC Utilizes New Aerial Trimming Technology



A pilot carefully flies his helicopter above the tall pines, not far from energized electric lines. Dangling under the helicopter from a flexible connecting rod, 10 round, motorized saws controlled by the pilot trim the trees, sending limbs falling to the ground.

It was part of a new Southside Electric Cooperative (SEC) aerial vegetation-management pilot project initiated late last year. For about a week, Aerial Solutions, a Tabor City, North Carolina, company, partnered with SEC to trim around power lines in Brunswick, Lunenburg and Mecklenburg counties. Thirty miles of trees were trimmed, including almost 26 in just three days.

Louis Urbine, the Cooperative's contractor administrator who directed the helicopter to areas for cutting and maintained communications between the pilot and SEC employees on the ground, says the aerial trimming removes limbs from ground to sky that hang over power lines that could potentially fall on those lines, possibly knocking out power for Cooperative members. Tree problems continue to be the largest cause of power disruptions for SEC.

Using the helicopter is a quicker and more efficient way to trim trees around electric lines, Urbine says. He adds it would have taken several months to cut the same amount of overhanging limbs by climbing the trees or using equipment from the ground.

“I was very pleased with how it went,” Urbine says.

SEC had line and tree crews and other Cooperative employees on the ground during the project to coordinate road closings, notify members, alert the pilot to any hazards and clean up.

Urbine says aerial trimming won’t work in housing subdivisions and more congested areas, but he thinks it shows promise for the future in certain areas.

“I think it has the potential to be a very useful tool for Southside to help improve our reliability,” says Urbine, who works out of SEC’s Powhatan office.

A video on the aerial vegetation-management project can be seen at [www.sec.coop/ROW](http://www.sec.coop/ROW).

SEC has more than 8,200 miles of power lines, making the trimming and removal of trees an important and continual job to improve reliability and ensure the safe flow of electricity to members across the 18-county service area.

The Cooperative understands the numerous benefits that trees provide, including offering shade, habitat for wildlife and visual appeal to a homeowner’s yard. However, trees also pose a threat to delivering safe and reliable electric service if they’re too close or grow into power lines.

Urbine says SEC tries to trim trees so limbs won’t grow back into lines during a six-year cycle. He adds that trimming is done for line clearance and safety. SEC uses the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) 300 Standard for trimming yard trees, which may be located along or within the Cooperative’s designated right-of-way. This method uses directional and lateral pruning, which directs growth away from power lines. In some cases, yard trees have to be removed, especially if they become hazards because they are diseased or dead.

SEC wants to work with members to help them develop responsible landscaping. Information about proper planting locations and species of trees is available at [www.sec.coop/ROW](http://www.sec.coop/ROW).

*Members can also contact Urbine at 1-800-552-2118 for more information.*

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