

Chugach Electric Association's

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Outlet



www.chugachelectric.com

Chugach partners with AFD to remove danger trees



Chugach's contractor is cutting and removing dead spruce trees on the Hillside as part of a partnership project with the Anchorage Fire Department.

Chugach and the Anchorage Fire Department are continuing a partnership to remove dead and dying trees on the Anchorage Hillside. The trees – most often beetle-killed spruce – are classified as “danger trees” that put the electric system at risk and provide a fuel source for wildfires. By the time funding runs out later this year, Chugach and the AFD will have cut and removed more than 4,600 trees from the Hillside in the past two years.

Danger trees are located outside of Chugach's rights of way. They are considered a danger because they have the potential to fall on a power line and cause a power outage. Chugach regularly clears its rights of way and has an ongoing program to cut danger trees. Under its own program, with the permission of property owners Chugach drops danger trees safely to the ground and leaves them for

the land owner. The AFD-funded work goes a step further and pays for Chugach's contractor to remove the downed trees from the property.

“Chugach and AFD are working pro-actively to reduce the potential of a brush fire,” said Sue Rodman, a forester with the Anchorage Fire Department Wildfire Mitigation Office. “It's important to take these critical steps to help limit the potential and the severity of a fire in the Municipality and therefore save lives and

property.”

The collaboration between Chugach and the AFD is good for all concerned. Chugach has an interest in reducing the threat to reliability from trees outside its right of way. The Anchorage Fire Department is interested in reducing the volume of hazardous fuels on the Anchorage Hillside. Both of these interests are shared by property owners.

The Chugach and AFD partnership continues a program the two organizations began last year. In 2005 the tree removal operation targeted 79 miles of overhead power lines across the Hillside at a cost of about \$300,000. More than 2,800 trees were cut and removed.

The 2005 project was funded as part of an ongoing effort to address concerns

about wildfire on the Hillside. The AFD has been using federal grant funds for a variety of wildfire mitigation projects in recent years.

This year the Anchorage Assembly approved spending another \$200,000 in grant funds to continue the partnership with Chugach and the danger tree removal program. Based on the previous year's work, Chugach and the AFD expect to complete the removal of about 1,850 danger trees in 2006 along the overhead power line corridors for the Anchorage Hillside east of Lake Otis Parkway.

“Danger tree removal is a good tactic used to mitigate the risks and hazards associated with wildfire,” Rodman said. “In the wake of the spruce bark beetle epidemic, Anchorage's dead spruce trees are weak at the bases and primed to fall over in a strong wind.”

In addition to the collaboration with AFD, Chugach's own danger tree program will cut an additional 7,000 to 8,000 trees this year.

Because the trees being cut are outside the utility right of way, property owners must give their OK to Chugach and the AFD before the contractor can do the work.

Safety is a key concern when cutting trees near electric facilities. Chugach uses a contractor that employs qualified line clearance tree trimmers to work around its energized power lines.

For more information, contact AFD at 267-4980 or Chugach at 762-7660.

Chugach builds photographic database

Chugach is taking advantage of high-resolution photography and searchable databases to enhance its ability to troubleshoot and maintain hundreds of miles of transmission line.

Chugach has contracted with Haverfield Corporation of Pennsylvania to provide an up-to-date record of more than 2,000 transmission line structures using photographs. An inspector in a specially equipped helicopter takes a series of photos from multiple vantage points as the helicopter hovers around each structure. By identifying issues early



The Haverfield Hughes 500D helicopter is equipped with a digital hi-resolution camera and gyro-stabilized binoculars that allow the inspector/photographer to capture a detailed record of each structure.

on, crews can do the maintenance work necessary to prevent a disruption of service.

Chugach will load the photos from the project into its geographic information system. The information will allow the utility to prioritize projects and coordinate similar projects within a geographic area.

While the prior visual inspections were effective in finding many problems, they did not provide the same detailed record that will be captured by the current project. The project is being done for a fraction of the cost of what it would take to compile the same data by having workers climb, inspect and photograph each structure.

The \$200,000 project started July 7 and is expected to be completed by mid-August.

Examples of the photographs from the project can be found at www.chugachelectric.com.

Governor vetoes REF appropriations

In May the Legislature approved funding for \$73.5 million in power projects from the Railbelt Energy Fund. The fund contains monies left over from the cancelled Susitna hydroelectric project and has been used to fund a number of projects since it was created in the 1980s.

However, Gov. Murkowski vetoed the appropriations for a variety of projects

for utilities throughout the Railbelt. Among the vetoes was \$12.5 million for Chugach for infrastructure.

The governor did let stand an \$800,000 appropriation to the Alaska Energy Authority to study the concept of an independent system operator to manage and dispatch power in the Railbelt.

Chugach awarded Tree Line USA certification

Chugach is in the top 5 percent of 3,300 electric utilities in the United States, according to the National Arbor Day Foundation. The group recently awarded Chugach its Tree Line USA certification for the seventh consecutive year. The award is given to recognize outstanding right of way and vegetation management practices, and community involvement in tree planting around power lines.

"This is a really good program for

both the utility and its customers," said Chugach arborist, Chris O'Brien. "It gives us credibility with the customers because the jobs we do are done according to nationally-approved pruning standards.

Patricia Joyner, from the State Division of Urban and Community Forestry, presented the national certification to Chugach's chairman of the board Jeff Lipscomb at the July 19 Board of Directors meeting.

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Danger tree hotline	762-7227
Underground locates	278-3121
Regulatory Commission of Alaska	
(800) 390-2782 or	276-6222
To report a power outage	
In Anchorage	762-7888
Outside Anchorage	(800) 478-7494

Monthly residential service costs

(based on 700 kwh)

Customer charge/month	\$ 8.42
Energy charge \$0.09282 x kwh =	\$64.97
Fuel adjustment \$0.03354 x kwh =	<u>\$23.48</u>
Sub-total	<u>\$96.87</u>
2% MOA Underground Charge =	\$ 1.87
RCC charge \$0.000387 x kwh =	<u>\$ 0.27</u>
Total bill	<u>\$99.01</u>

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