



# City of Coral Gables Standard Procedures for FPL Pruning Trees and Removing Palms Away from Electric Wires

Updated: February 18, 2020

## 1. When a tree of concern is identified within FPL distribution facilities:

- a) For reference, Florida Power & Light (FPL) distribution facilities are the uncoated (bare) wires typically running along the back and side property lines throughout the residential neighborhoods.
- b) FPL identifies a tree that meets certain conditions and will have authority to “make ready” and/or remove.
  - “Make ready” is an FPL term for pruning a tree or palm back to a safe distance away from the electrical wires which is typically 10’ or more from the wires.
  - Property owner removes tree once FPL completes “make ready” pruning.
  - City of Coral Gables (City) Code Enforcement can get involved to cite property owner if needed.
- c) If condition is a small palm or bamboo (i.e. Alexander, Christmas, Areca, or Fishtale Palm)
  - Once the fronds of a small palm make contact with a wire, FPL will have authority to remove the entire palm to the ground; where cutting the palm to the ground is not feasible, FPL must cut the palm trunk at least 1-foot or more below the lowest wire (AT&T).
  - FPL will take a photo with GPS coordinates and dates of the before and after condition.
  - FPL will notify the City via e-mail and will notify the property owner with a door hanger.
- d) If condition is a large palm, FPL can top below the lowest wire (AT&T).
  - Once the fronds of a large palm make contact with a wire, FPL will do the following:
    - FPL will take a photo with GPS coordinates and dates of the before and after condition.
    - FPL will notify the City via e-mail or a mutually agreed upon regular reporting method, and FPL will notify the property owner with a door hanger.
  - The property owner will have the ability to notify FPL and the City that they are OK with FPL proceeding with the removal of the palm or that the property owner will relocate the palm within a to be determined amount of time.
  - Once the property owner notifies FPL and the City that they are OK with proceeding with the removal, FPL will have authority to remove the entire palm to the ground; where cutting the palm to the ground is not feasible, FPL must cut the palm trunk at least 1-foot or more below the lowest wire (AT&T).
  - CCG Code Enforcement can get involved to cite if needed.
  - Note: The intent of this process is to avoid removing a high value, rare, or sentimental large palm that the property owner would prefer to relocate at their expense rather than have FPL remove to the ground or cut at 1-foot or more below the lowest wire (AT&T).
- e) City (when appropriate) can potentially help mitigate costs by:
  - Waiving tree removal/relocation permit fee.
  - Reducing or eliminating required tree canopy mitigation.
  - Hauling away vegetative debris placed on the City swale.
- f) City will create door hangers for after the fact notification purposes and explaining vegetation clearing from near FPL lines.
- g) If a tree or palm is touching wires, the resident should report using the existing FPL channels.
- h) If a small palm caused an outage, FPL will have authority to remove palm for power restoration.

- i) If a large palm caused an outage, FPL will need to follow the procedure outlined below; however, the amount of time provided to the resident to notify FPL and the City of their intent to relocate vs. remove the palm may be significantly shortened.

## **2) Service drop and service line clearance:**

- a) For reference, an FPL service drop is the coated wires that typically connect from distribution lines to homes and buildings, and FPL service lines are the coated wires that typically connect from distribution lines to streetlights.
- b) It is the property owner's responsibility to trim away from the service drop to their home or building. Property owners should hire a qualified line-clearing tree pruning professional to safely clear vegetation near their service drop.
- c) If it is necessary to de-energize the service drop to a property so that work can be performed safely, the property owner should call FPL at (800) 226-3545 and ask to have the FPL Service Planning Group contact the property owner to schedule an appointment to "untap the service drop for planned maintenance." FPL will schedule a date and time for the service drop to be de-energized to allow the property owner to perform vegetation maintenance near the service drop, and then FPL will re-energize the line once work has been completed.

## **3) Planned maintenance / problem area notification:**

- a) In those cases where FPL trimmers find problem conditions during scheduled maintenance, they are to notify both FPL Vegetation Maintenance (VM) and City of Coral Gables Public Works Department Landscape Services arborists.
- b) At this point the City and FPL will work with the resident on removal and/or mitigation of condition as noted above in #1.

## **4) "Make ready" condition / unplanned maintenance:**

- a) Upon specific conditions, where the City or a resident reaches out to FPL, and FPL VM identifies a condition where trees are in the FPL easement above or encroaching the secondary wires (typically uncoated wires):
  - FPL will evaluate the condition, cut back to "appropriate" clearance (10' vertical and horizontal), and "make ready" for property owner to contract an arborist to remove and/or reduce canopy.

## **5) Debris removal:**

- a) During regular maintenance or restoration conditions, FPL will remove debris.
- b) In "make ready" conditions and unplanned maintenance conditions where there is a significant amount of vegetation debris or a tree/palm removal FPL will coordinate work with the CCG and the property owner and will place debris on the City swale area in a safe manner and accessible for City trash cranes to collect.

## **6) Problematic concern conditions:**

- a) In the cases where FPL identifies a potential concern condition, FPL will notify City and mark the tree with dot, line, or tag with an agreed upon spray paint or tag, where the final cut will exist. (i.e. non-native, invasive, fruit trees, dead and dying fast growing species).
- b) City will leave a door hanger and will coordinate with the property owner, FPL, and Code Enforcement as needed.

## **7) Planting trees under streetlight service line wires:**

- a) The City will resume the planting of large trees (i.e. oak trees, large trees) under the service line circuits in the ROW.
- b) City will maintain trees as part of their ongoing citywide tree pruning to avoid contact with the service line wire and/or extreme tension conditions.

### **8) Ongoing City tree replacement practices under distribution facilities:**

Under FPL distribution facilities (typically uncoated wires), as the existing large canopy trees (i.e. black olive, ficus, royal poinciana, oak, and mahogany) get sick or damaged and are removed, the City proposes to replace them with medium canopy trees (i.e. bridalveil, orange geiger, silver buttonwood, tabebuia bahamensis, and cassia bakeriana) and work with FPL to keep them at or below the topmost FPL distribution facilities.

- a) These trees will be maintained by the City, along with FPL.
- b) City vegetation maintenance will be coordinated to be alternating with the FPL VM cycle.
- c) City tree pruning crews will prune the young trees to work towards training the trees away from FPL lines.

### **9) City new large canopy tree planting under FPL distribution facilities:**

- a) In those cases where there are new plantings of large canopy trees in wide swales within the ROW under FPL distribution facilities:
  - City will have a field meeting with FPL VM prior to planting.
  - City and FPL will coordinate and come to an agreement on the planting location of the new tree.

### **10) Work planning:**

- a) FPL will evaluate the potential pre-planning of VM work to coincide with scheduled / routine maintenance outside of standard cycles.

### **11) New construction landscape plans:**

- a) City will try to catch inappropriate tree plantings near FPL facilities during the plan review.
- b) City inspectors will try to evaluate landscaping planted nearby FPL lines before closing building permit. (The City currently does not have a City landscape inspector, but the City has created and is looking to fill a part-time landscape inspector position.)

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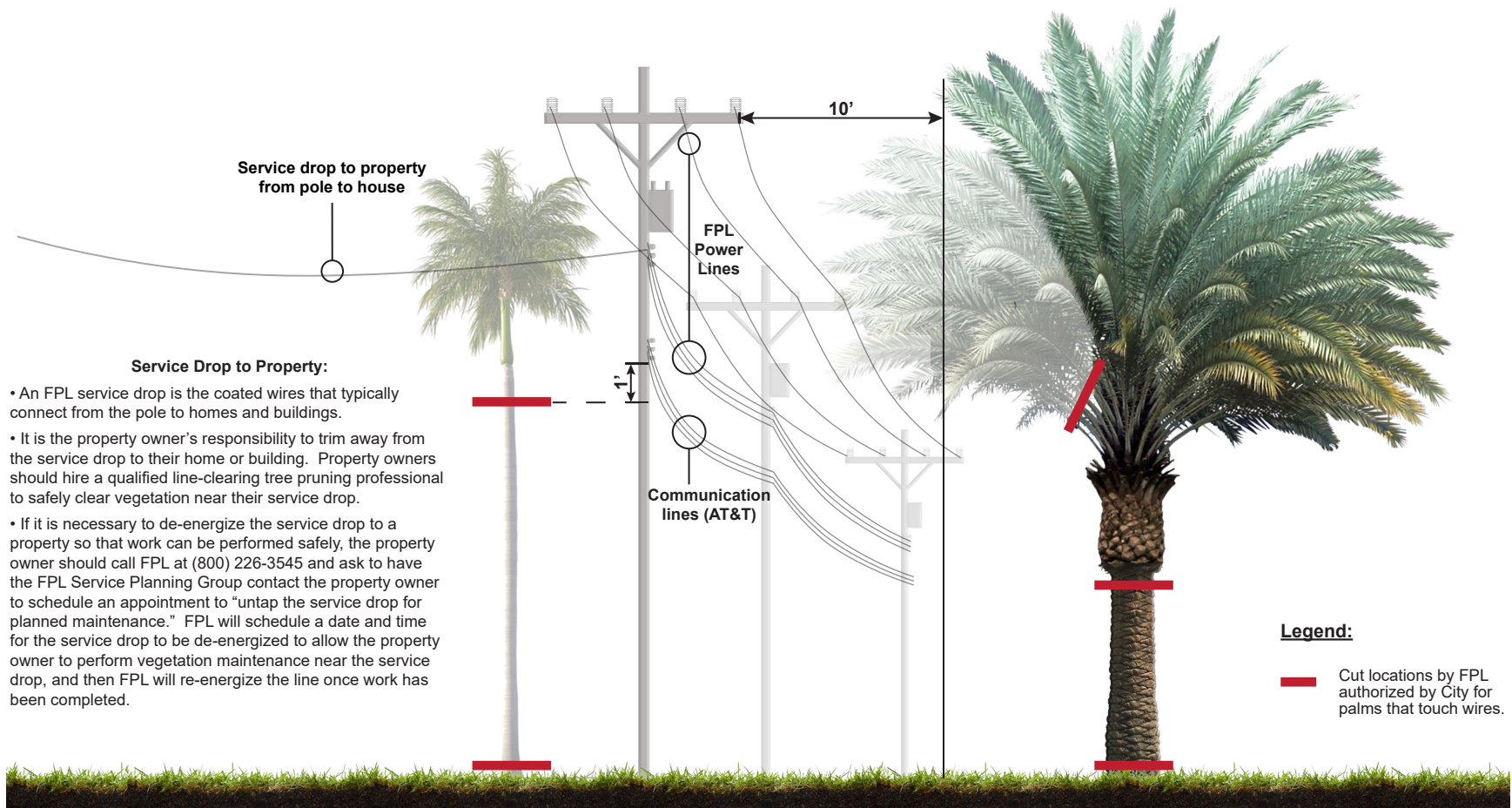
Palms whose fronds touch FPL wires must be removed or relocated by property owner, or FPL will cut to ground level or 1' or more below lowest wire.

## SMALL PALMS OR BAMBOO

Once the fronds of a small palm or bamboo make contact with a wire, FPL will have the authority to remove the entire palm to the ground; where cutting the palm to the ground is not feasible, FPL must cut the palm trunk at least 1-foot or more below the lowest wire (AT&T).

## LARGE PALMS

If tree meets certain conditions, FPL will prune palm back to a safe distance of 10' or more away from electrical wires. But if the palm is too close, City will notify property owner to allow the opportunity for the property owner to relocate palm prior to palm removal by FPL



### Service Drop to Property:

- An FPL service drop is the coated wires that typically connect from the pole to homes and buildings.
- It is the property owner's responsibility to trim away from the service drop to their home or building. Property owners should hire a qualified line-clearing tree pruning professional to safely clear vegetation near their service drop.
- If it is necessary to de-energize the service drop to a property so that work can be performed safely, the property owner should call FPL at (800) 226-3545 and ask to have the FPL Service Planning Group contact the property owner to schedule an appointment to "untap the service drop for planned maintenance." FPL will schedule a date and time for the service drop to be de-energized to allow the property owner to perform vegetation maintenance near the service drop, and then FPL will re-energize the line once work has been completed.