

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SB 6473**

**AS OF FEBRUARY 4, 1992**

**Brief Description:** Regulating transmission line tree trimming.

**SPONSORS:** Senators Thorsness, Nelson, Saling and Sutherland

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES**

**Staff:** Phil Moeller (786-7445)

**Hearing Dates:** February 4, 1992

**BACKGROUND:**

Most electrical transmission and distribution lines run above ground. Cost and reliability factors inhibit the placement of all electrical facilities below the ground.

Reliable electricity supply has become more important to the operation of modern society. Newer sophisticated equipment is more sensitive to electrical disruptions and uneven flow of voltages through the electrical system.

Electrical outages are often caused by interference between power lines and nearby vegetation. There is concern that in some instances clearly identifiable vegetation presents a potential hazard to the electrical distribution system, thereby subjecting a community of ratepayers to the risk of power disruption.

Electrical utilities owned by private stockholders, known as investor-owned utilities, are regulated by the Utilities and Transportation Commission. Electric utilities owned by cities are governed by the citizen-elected council of the city. Electric utilities formed under a public utility district are governed by a board of citizen-elected commissioners.

**SUMMARY:**

By September 1, 1992, the Utilities and Transportation Commission is directed to adopt rules for investor-owned electric utilities specifying procedures related to removing trees and vegetation that constitute a hazard to overhead electric lines. The rules shall require: annual inspections of electric lines; guidelines for determining a hazard; notification procedures for property owners; a 90-day period for property owner removal of the hazard; a procedure for utility removal of the hazard after 90 days; and an annual report on removing hazards, related lawsuits, and outages caused by vegetation hazards.

By September 1, 1993, any public utility district or municipality distributing electric energy shall adopt procedures under the same requirements as listed above.

A utility that complies with the applicable guidelines developed by its governing body is granted a defense in a civil action brought for damages when vegetation is removed.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** requested February 4, 1992