

# Austin Energy Operational Update Q2 FY19

Electric Utility Commission

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**Note: This is an excerpt of the Q2FY19 Update pertaining to the Vegetation Management Program**

Formerly Item 25, May 13, 2019

# Austin Energy Operational Update

## Vegetation Management Program



# Austin Energy Vegetation Management Program

## Barrier to Prudency: Risk of Wildfire



“We recognize that more must be done to adapt to and address the increasing threat of wildfires and extreme weather in order to keep our customers and communities safe,” said John Simon, PG&E Interim Chief Executive (WSJ - 2/28/19)



# Austin Energy - Vegetation Management Program

## Barriers to Prudence: Inadequate trim clearances and heavy tree regrowth



Northwest (Balcones Woods)

Southwest (South Lamar)

Northeast (Windsor Park)

Travis County Rainfall \*: Years with >20 weeks of severe, extreme or exceptional drought: 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 \*National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) program



# OUR AREA

# Austin Energy - Vegetation Management Program

## Achieving prudence: Increase clearances

~~AE's **pre-2006** pruning clearances:  
Fast growing species – 11 to 13 ft.  
Slow growing species – 7 to 9 ft.~~

~~AE's **CURRENT** pruning clearances:  
Fast growing species - 8 ft.  
Slow growing species - 4 ft.~~

- Clearances for 2-3 year cycle
- With no range of clearances, flexibility in the field reduced

AE's **NEW** pruning clearances:  
Fast growing species - **11 to 15** ft.  
Slow growing species – **7 to 10** ft.

- Clearances for 4-5 year cycle
- Range of clearances for flexibility in field
- Compliant with International Society of Arboriculture Standards
- Compliant with City's tree preservation ordinances



# Austin Energy - Vegetation Management Program

## Achieving prudence: Streamline Customer Notifications

- **SIMPLIFY:**

- Benchmark best customer notification practices with other utilities
- Reduce steps that require multiple vehicle trips to properties and multiple attempts to reach property owners
- Examine surveys to determine customer priorities for improving communications
- For properties that do not require a tree removal, eliminate property owner sign-off on vegetation work plan

- **IMPROVE:**

- Conduct multi-channel customer communications – pruning schedule on website, door hangers and mail
- **Continue providing detailed vegetative work plan**
- **Continue Customer Refusal Process when Customer Consultation unsuccessful**
- Reduce lead time between initial customer notification and performance of work
  - Current lead time is between 30 and 60 days (the disinterested customer drives the schedule)
  - Reduce lead time to 10 to 14 days
- Focus attention on property owners who request Customer Consultation
- Kick-off communication plan that includes Public Service Announcements



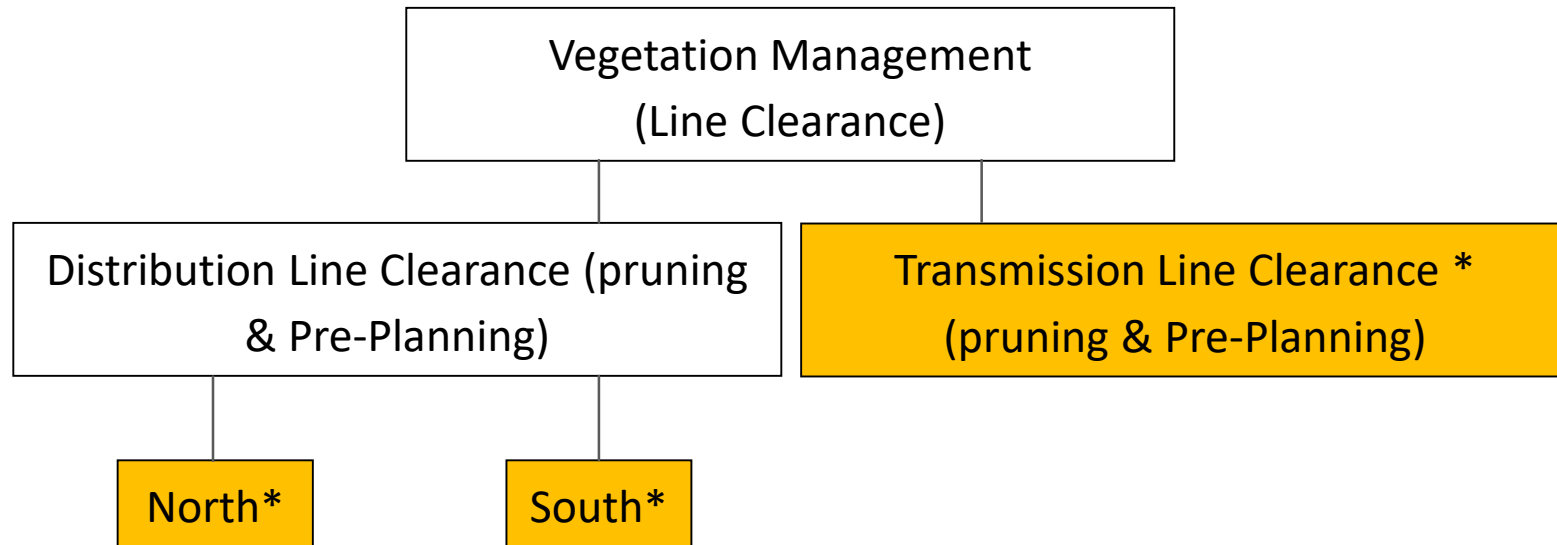
# Austin Energy Operational Update

## Line Clearance Contract Approach



# Austin Energy - Vegetation Management Contracts

## Current Contracts



\*Energized Line Clearance Work

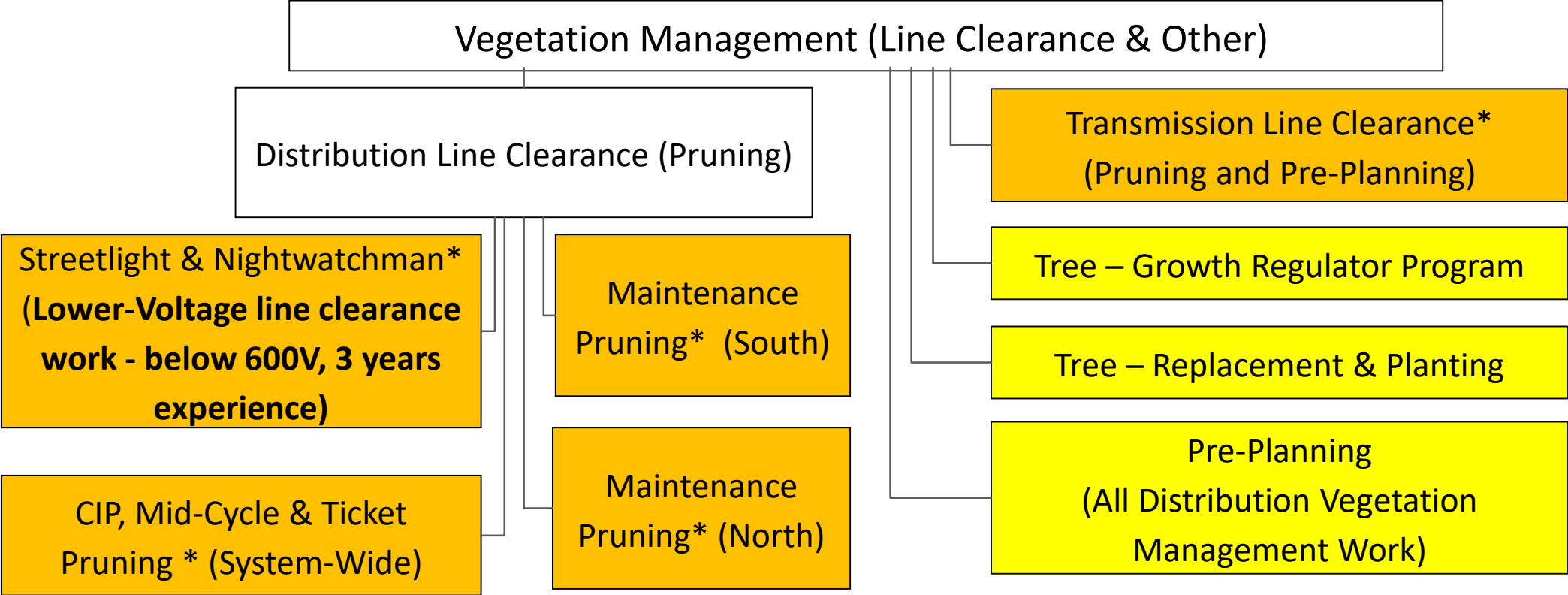
Current Contracts - 





# Austin Energy – Vegetation Management Contracts

## Planned Contract Strategy & Opportunities



\*Energized Line Clearance Work

Contracts – shown in color



# Austin Energy - Vegetation Management

## SUMMATION

- **IMPLEMENT** new tree pruning **CLEARANCES**
- **IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS** with Customers
  - Broader and more timely communication of tree pruning schedule and plans
  - Focus attention on property owners who request Customer Consultations
  - Provide Public Service Announcements
- **IMPROVE PROCESSES** by reducing lead time and multiple vehicle trips
- **IMPLEMENT PLANNED CONTRACT STRATEGY** by adding contracts for services requiring varying types and levels of experience
  - RCA in June for one-year extension of Distribution Line Clearance contracts
  - Develop and issue solicitations, including experience-building line clearance work, during FY20

