

# Austin Energy Distribution Vegetation Management Program

Date: May 17, 2021

Elton Richards, VP Field Operations



Date: May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021

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# Frozen Vegetation on Power Lines

- Three winter storms crossed the area Feb. 11-18
- Ice weighed down limbs overhanging power lines, causing outages prior to ERCOT mandated outages
- Ice accumulation continued and damaged limbs continued falling after mandated outages ended
- Frozen lines and vegetation created hazardous working conditions
- Contributed to increased restoration times



# AE - VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

## How does Austin Energy's tree pruning impact reliability?

### 2021 Feb 2021 Ice Storm Electric Outages

#### POWER DELIVERY MODEL

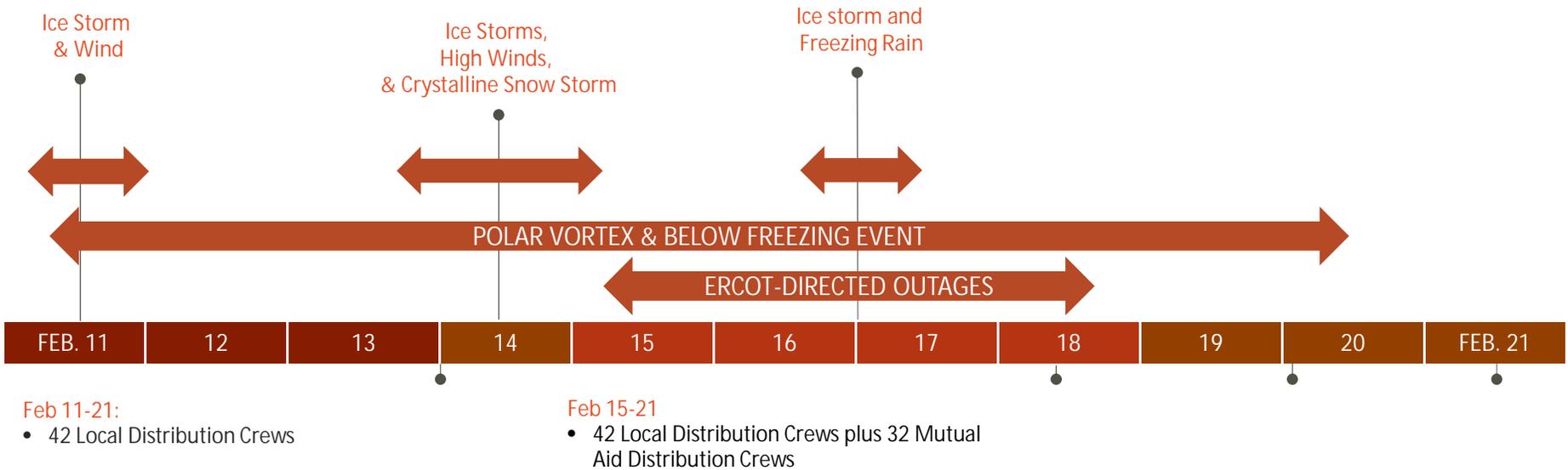


No vegetation caused outages

No vegetation caused outages

Primary cause of outages was vegetation contact with power lines. This includes direct contact, falling trees, and falling branches. There were also 4 automobile accidents that destroyed poles and resulted in damages

# Winter Event Timeline (February 11-21)



Feb 22-26

- All Crews were conducting debris cleanup and trimming

Slide 4

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DA1

Dickey, Amanda, 4/23/2021

# Austin Energy Pillars of Excellence

## Quality Vegetation Management Program

Reliability  
(Under Performing)

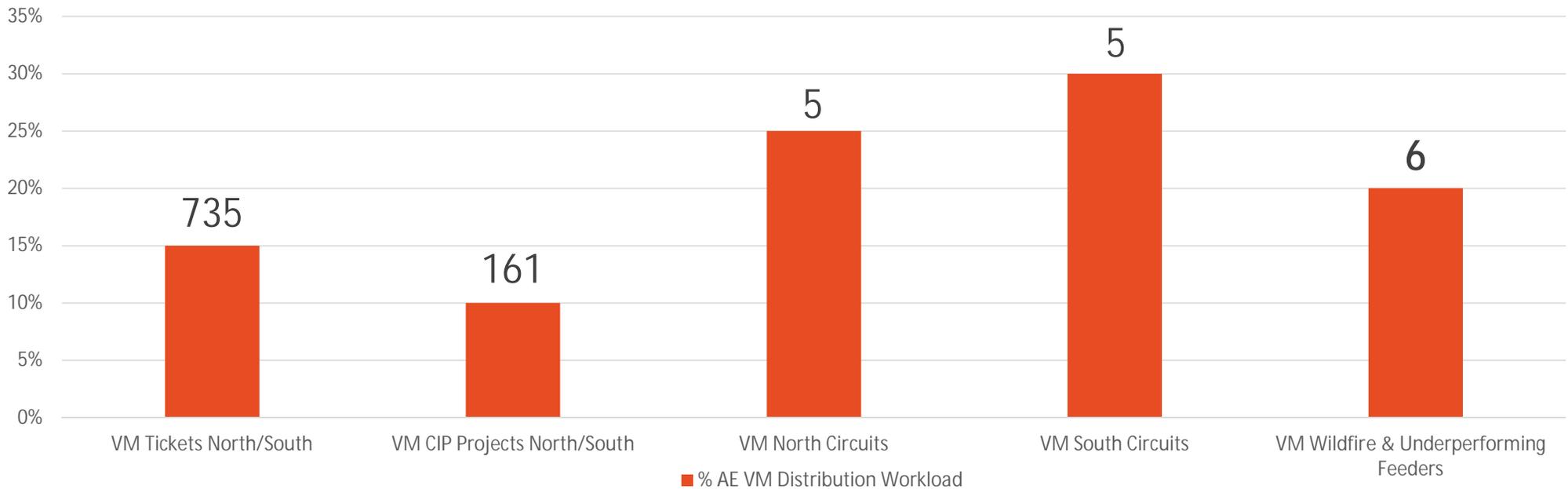
Sustainability  
(5 yr. – 7 yr. cycle)

Fire Mitigation  
(Risk Mitigation)



# AE - VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

AE Vegetation Management (VM) Distribution Workload-Mar 1- Sept 30, 2021



- Mar 1, 2021- Sept 30, 2021 Workload Percentage
- VM Customer Request Tree Pruning Tickets- North (430) South (305) = Total 735
- VM Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) Tree Pruning- North (50) South (101) = Total 161

Steck 07 – Sept 19





# Environmental Pruning Limitations

Month	Pruning Schedule
Jan	Prune
Feb	Oak Wilt Season
Mar	Oak Wilt Season/Bird Habitat Preservation
Apr	Oak Wilt Season/Bird Habitat Preservation
May	Oak Wilt Season/Bird Habitat Preservation
Jun	Oak Wilt Season/Bird Habitat Preservation
Jul	Oak Wilt Season/Bird Habitat Preservation
Aug	Bird Habitat Preservation
Sep	Prune
Oct	Prune
Nov	Prune
Dec	Prune



Non-Oak tree work continues on all planned circuits



# DISTRIBUTION VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

## DISTRIBUTION VEGETATION MANAGEMENT: 2021 Contractor Crews Ramp Up Information

January 17, 2021

AE VM Distribution Energized Line Clearance Contractors

- Asplundh Tree -20 crews
- Wright Tree- 15 crews
- Davey Tree- 3 crews
- TOTAL 38

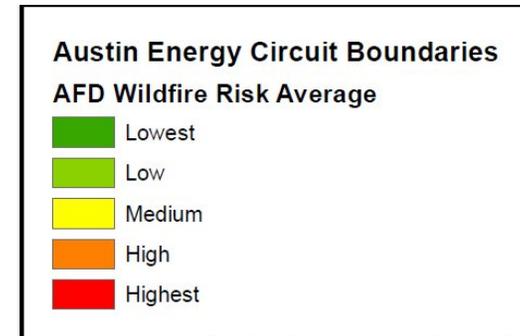
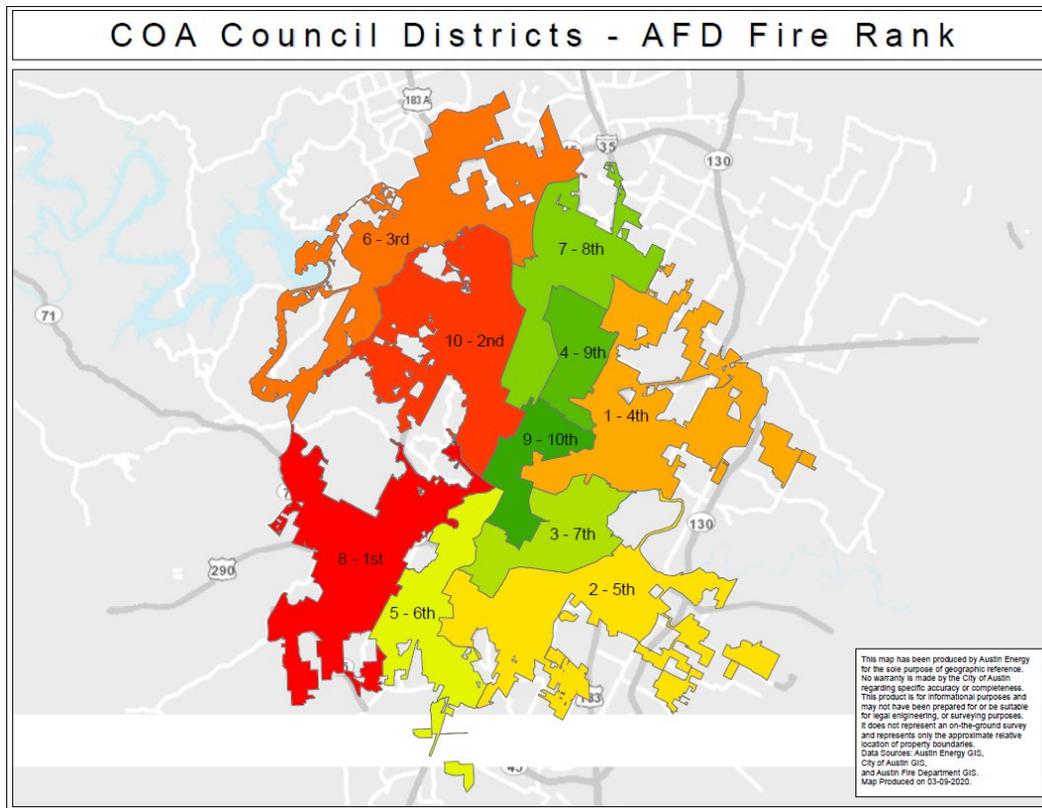
May 2021

AE VM Distribution Energized Line Clearance Contractors

- Asplundh Tree- 20 crews
- Wright Tree – 20 crews
- Davey Tree – 18 crews
- TOTAL 58



# Collaboration with AFD on Wildfire Risk Areas





# Recent Improvements

1. Remaining in areas with many oaks to continue pruning during oak wilt season
  - Continuing to prepare workplans on oaks
  - Ready to begin pruning oaks as soon as oak wilt window has closed
  - Prioritizing oak pruning outside of oak wilt window (Aug. - Jan.)
2. Recently established industry standards for pruning
  - Prevents a repeat of current overgrowth
  - Fast-growing trees pruned back to 15 feet
  - Slow-growing trees pruned back to 10 feet
3. Possibility of pruning certain oaks during oak wilt window
  - Limited oak tree pruning could be performed during oak wilt window
  - On underperforming feeders, wild fire risks and for emergencies
  - Tools must be sterilized between each tree pruning and pruning cuts protected





# VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Public Assistance –Collaboration with Council Members

Improve overall wildfire and underperforming feeder tree pruning objectives

- STAKEHOLDER EDUCATION/MEETINGS WITH COUNCIL MEMBERS, HOAs, ARR AND PROPERTY OWNERS:
    - Educate the public of the importance of tree pruning/removals for the safety of AE Staff while accessing AE infrastructure
    - Educate the public of the Line Clearance's specifications implemented in 2019
      - Fast-growing species: 15 ft., Slow-growing species: 10 ft., Transmission Cables: 25 ft.
    - Educate the public and Council Members of the additional VM Programs implemented to improve system reliability and safety for AE staff and the public
      - Trees that grow too closely to power lines also pose a reliability risk to customers
- Unpruned trees:
- Increase the likelihood of fires.
  - Can cause serious injuries or fatalities to anyone who climbs trees too close to power lines

According to the Texas Wildfire Mitigation Project, power lines caused more than 4,000 wildfires in Texas from 2009 to 2013. The Austin Fire Department's Wildfire Division says 60% of structures in Austin are located in wildfire-prone areas.





**Customer Driven.  
Community Focused.<sup>SM</sup>**

