

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FortisBC working with property owners to reduce tree-related power outages

A unique program to reduce the risk outages will benefit both FortisBC and Nelson Hydro electricity customers

Kelowna, B.C. – February 23, 2022: To help reduce power outages for both FortisBC Inc. (FortisBC) and Nelson Hydro electricity customers, FortisBC is piloting a unique program to work with private property owners to remove trees that are outside of its existing utility rights-of-way and pose a risk of damaging transmission lines.

“Developing a program to collaborate with private property owners to remove trees outside of our rights-of-way is a first for us, but a win-win all around,” said Devin Krenz, senior project manager, FortisBC. “Once complete, our transmission lines will be at less risk of damage from trees, customers will be less likely to experience tree-related outages, property owners will have reduced risk of their trees coming into contact with power lines.”

Each year, trees from beyond the established right-of-way fall due to storms, winds or root disease, and come into contact with the transmission lines. This is the leading cause of widespread outages for both FortisBC and Nelson Hydro electricity customers. These outages can be quite prolonged because of how difficult these areas are to access for repairs. With severe storms becoming more frequent, both power companies are concerned the problem is likely to worsen in coming years if not addressed.

To help address the issue, FortisBC is approaching property owners along selected transmission corridors to identify and remove by forestry professionals. Through the program, property owners will have the option to use the timber or have it hauled to local mills.

The first phase of this program is underway on a FortisBC transmission line that runs along the north shore of Kootenay Lake. The line is just under 60 kilometers in length and is integral to supplying power for FortisBC customers in the area as well Nelson Hydro customers on the North Shore. This section was chosen because of the high number of trees coming into contact with the line, which account for about 50 per cent of the outages in the area each year.

It's a program that's receiving full support from Nelson Hydro.

“Fifty per cent of the electricity we need to serve our customers is purchased from FortisBC. This electricity is delivered to our system on the transmission lines that run through heavily treed areas like the north shore of Kootenay Lake,” said Scott Spencer, general manager, Nelson Hydro. “We appreciate the effort FortisBC is making to address this problem and we appreciate the property owners who have agreed to participate so far.”

The response from many property owners has already been supportive, enabling FortisBC to clear a section in Blewett last fall. FortisBC plans to move into the Long Beach area in the spring. The information gained from the first phase of this program will be used to make improvements going forward. The program is expected to last five years and will also include other transmission lines in heavily treed areas around Kootenay Lake and those that feed Slocan Valley. If a property is being considered for this program, they will be contacted by FortisBC. Any Nelson Hydro customers that have questions, please contact nelsonhydro@nelson.ca.

Even with these efforts to reduce the risk of tree-related outages, both Nelson Hydro and FortisBC would like to remind their customers to always be prepared for unplanned outages, especially during storm seasons. For more information on how to prepare and information about current outages, visit fortisbc.com or nelson.ca.

About FortisBC

FortisBC Inc. is a regulated utility focused on providing safe and reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost. FortisBC Inc. employs approximately 560 British Columbians and serves approximately 182,012 direct and indirect customers in B.C.'s South Interior. FortisBC Inc. owns and operates four regulated hydroelectric generating plants, as well as approximately 7,335 kilometres of transmission and distribution power lines. FortisBC Inc. is a subsidiary of Fortis Inc., a leader in the North American regulated electric and gas utility industry. FortisBC Inc. uses the FortisBC name and logo under license from Fortis Inc. For further information on FortisBC, visit fortisbc.com. For further information on Fortis Inc., visit fortisinc.com.

About Nelson Hydro

Nelson Hydro is a City of Nelson-owned and operated utility and is the local supply authority for electrical service in the City of Nelson and surrounding area. Operations include a 16MW generating plant, six substations with approximately 24km of transmission lines and 300km of distribution power lines within its service territory. Nelson Hydro serves approximately 11,000 customers in the City of Nelson and the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK). The rural service area and rates are subject to regulation by the BC Utilities Commission, whereas the City of Nelson provides oversight and regulation for the urban service area. For more information on Nelson Hydro, visit nelson.ca/hydro.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Nicole Brown
Corporate Communications Advisor
FortisBC
Phone: 250-469-6078
nicole.brown@fortisbc.com
fortisbc.com
24-hour media line: 1-855-322-6397

Ginger Lester
Communications Coordinator
City of Nelson
Phone: 250-352-8263
glester@nelson.ca
nelson.ca