

# Cardinal-Hickory Creek

TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

## Working with Wisconsin landowners

### What is an easement?

An easement is an interest in real property that conveys the right to use property for a specific purpose and to restrict certain uses that interfere with the specific purpose of the easement. Ownership and title to the property remain with the landowner.

- Easements allow utilities to construct, operate and maintain electric transmission lines.
- Construction of new transmission lines or upgrades to existing facilities is done after easement rights are in place. The landowner will be informed of the need for, time frame and duration of work. We also will work with the landowner following completion of construction to inspect the right-of-way and ensure proper restoration.
- Easement language includes the right to access the right-of-way to conduct maintenance. Transmission line maintenance includes cutting, trimming and/or removing trees, brush and/or undergrowth under the line or in danger of falling on the line.
- The presence of a transmission line limits certain land use within the easement, including buildings and trees. Landowners are compensated for any loss of use of the land in the form of a one-time payment for an easement area.

### Easement negotiation process

When constructing a new transmission line or upgrading an existing line that requires the use of a landowner's property, certain requirements need to be followed after easement rights are in place.

#### Easement negotiations typically begin:

- After approval of the project and a route is ordered by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin.
- When there is enough information available to assemble the documents necessary for easement negotiation.

Utilities will mail or deliver the landowner a letter advising that the company desires to acquire easement rights. The letter also will explain the easement acquisition process and schedule. A real estate representative will then contact the landowner to set a meeting to present these materials, and to discuss and address landowner concerns and questions regarding the easement.

It is important for landowners to make us aware of all issues that are pertinent to the landowner's property and to discuss how the proposed easement and transmission line influence the property. During the negotiations, we will follow all required processes, provide information and answer questions about easement terms and conditions, procedures, and considerations offered. Any special issues that may need to be reviewed and addressed by other areas of the company such as engineering, environmental and construction will be coordinated and addressed during this time. Negotiations are very important to resolving landowner questions and concerns specific to the individual property.

#### We inform landowners of:

- The length and width of the easement area on their property.
- The number, type and maximum height of all structures to be erected within the easement area on their property.
- The minimum height of the transmission lines above the ground.
- The number of wires and maximum voltage of the lines to be constructed, operated and maintained within the easement area on their property.



## Calculating compensation

The calculation of the amount of compensation for the easement incorporates the fair-market value of the landowner's property and the easement rights required for the new or upgraded line. These calculations may be based on a market sales study or a real estate appraisal report, specific to the landowners property.

According to the Rights of Landowners Under Wisconsin Eminent Domain Law, landowners are entitled to have an independent appraisal done by an appraiser of their choice, the reasonable cost of which will be reimbursed by utilities to the landowner. An appraisal is a written report that describes the easement rights being acquired and the appraisal sets forth a documented conclusion as to the value of the property.

## Property values

Many landowners ask whether the presence of a transmission line will impact the value of their property. A real estate appraisal report provides this analysis and each property is reviewed in detail.

The decision to purchase property is based on a wide variety of factors that are unique to individual buyers. For example, primary factors influencing real estate purchasing decisions may include commuting time, proximity to schools, household amenities, lot size, condition and size of the home, condition of property improvements, price, quality of land (including soils, rocks, waterways and drainage) and neighborhood. Market conditions (buyer's market vs. seller's market) also influence property values and the number of days a property has been on the market.

Reliable research on the impact of transmission lines on property values is complex, since it must adjust for numerous factors that influence buying decisions before the true effect of the transmission line on the property value can be isolated. Research that does not account for these numerous other factors should be viewed with some degree of skepticism.

## Construction

In addition to compensating the landowner for the easement, utilities pay separately for any crop damages and/or physical damages to property that result from transmission line construction and maintenance. Payment for crop damages is based on area damaged, current market prices and the expected yields in the area.

Prior to the start of construction, trees and other woody vegetation will be cleared from the right-of-way. The disposal of the trees and brush will be part of the negotiations. Crop damage payments may also address future crop yield impact due to soil compaction.

## Ongoing maintenance

To ensure the safe and reliable operation of our transmission facilities, we will control weeds and brush around the transmission line structures, and periodically trim and clear trees. Herbicides are often used following clearing and mowing to control re-growth of incompatible vegetation. Landowners may request that herbicidal chemicals not be used on their property. Other than removing dangerous trees, which is done on a selective basis, we do not typically use any lands beyond the boundaries of the easement for any purpose, including entry to or exit from the right-of-way, without consent of the landowner.

For more information, read the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin brochure about easements and rights-of-way: <http://psc.wi.gov/thelibrary/publications/electric/>.

