

# Best Management Practices for Vegetation Management at Electric Utility Facilities

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## Abstract

Controlling vegetation inside key electric utility facilities is a necessary maintenance activity for a utility's safe and reliable operation. Substations, switchyards, and other facilities require perpetual maintenance to maintain a vegetation-free environment. At a minimum, vegetation-maintenance treatment needs to be conducted annually; in some climatic regions, multiple treatments may be required. The objective of this research paper was to define current industry practices by means of a literature review; seek out nonherbicidal methods to control vegetation within utility facilities; and use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles to develop an outline of best-management practices for total vegetation control. Through this study, EPRI is seeking to provide information about methods to achieve sustainability in the total control of vegetation in and around utility facilities—especially substations. Alternative methods to the annual application of herbicides are explored, and the viability of these methods for the cost-effective control of vegetation is assessed. The study found that the vast majority of North American utilities use herbicides as the predominant method for total vegetation control at substations and other utility sites. Europe is leading the way in identifying alternatives to herbicide use for total vegetation control. Worldwide, utilities are seeking and experimenting with environmentally responsible and cost-effective alternatives to herbicides. One of the most notable recent changes is the adoption of IPM principles for total vegetation control at utility facilities. Consideration is being given to off-site damage caused by herbicide drift, runoff, and groundwater contamination.

## Keywords:

Alternative weed-control methods, Best-management practices (BMPs), Herbicide, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM), Substations

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