Resident angry about Edison tree-trimming

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

When Mary Judge came home from work and took one look at how her 50-year-old trees were trimmed, she was aghast.

"It was such a shock," Judge said, as she pointed to several trees in her front yard that were trimmed by Detroit Edison crews to make way for the electrical lines.

"I wasn't hysterical. I just said, 'I want you to leave,'" Judge said to the three Detroit Edison men, whom she found trimming her trees.

Judge believes the trees were trimmed poorly. And one, she hopes, won't die. "I told them (Edison crew) I was distressed. One of the trees was badly cut," she said.

But Judge is also bothered because she says she wasn't notified in advance that the crew would be there to trim the trees to make way for the electrical wires. "This is the first time this has happened when no one is home," Judge said.

Judge said she wanted to be notified so she could have someone on *hand who knows something about* trees to ensure that the trimming would not damage her large trees in front of her house, which are in the 120-feet utility easement.

"We make an attempt to do that — notify homeowners. If we're in the area, we go ahead of time, leaving notices. If no one is home, we can't afford to make a trip back," said Detroit Edison spokesman Ben Tallerico.

DALE COUNTEGAN, Farmington Hills community development and planning director, said the city has received several complaints already from residents concerned about Detroit Edison's tree trimming.

Tallerico said crews attempt to be careful when trimming trees. The trees, which are in the utility right-of-way, must be trimmed to maintain and improve circuitry.

"The majority of outages in Oakland County are caused by trees," Tallerico said. "We are working hard to improve the circuitry in Oakland County."

Despite complaints from residents who say the trimming is often haphazard and leaves the trees unsightly, Tallerico says there's rhyme and reason why trees are trimmed the way they are.

"It's in the eye of the beholder. We have standards for how we cut the trees in our easements," he said. "If we kill a tree we will make every effort to please the customer. We go *in and try to do the best we can do.*"

Judge said a Detroit Edison representative has been trying to contact here. Judge wants a replacement for the tree she feels is badly trimmed — if it dies. But she says she just wishes the trimming had been done properly to begin with.

"I can see where they may want to move two or three branches. But I'm concerned about the tree dying. I won't be alive in 50 years to see a new one grow," Judge said.

Countegan said that despite the need to trim trees — and removing trees in some cases — Detroit Edison must follow the city's tree ordinance, just as residents are required.

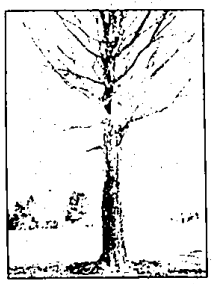
IN ANY given lot, which includes the utility easement, a homeowner or Detroit Edison is allowed to remove two trees a year. Edison is expected to get homeowners' permission to remove trees. If Edison or a resident wishes to remove a third tree, a permit from the city is required.

"We will side with the residents. We think it is reasonable for Edison to clear the lines, but not totally remove trees. We see the value of what they mean to the residents," Countegan said.

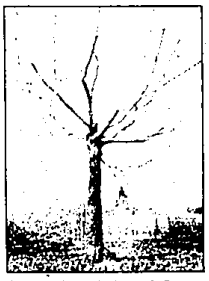
Tallerico said he is disappointed the Farmington Hills City Council has not signed a tree replacement agreement with Detroit Edison. The agreement calls for allowing Edison to remove certain trees — that Tallerico described as trash trees — in the easements and replace them with slow-growing flowering trees, such as rosebuds or crabapples.

The city council wanted Edison to make personal contact with homeowners before removing trees and have homeowners sign for the removal. "That's what Edison said they can't do," Countegan said. "I think the city council put conditions on it and I don't know whether Edison can comply with them."

Countegan suggests that anyone who is concerned about Edison crews trimming trees should call Edison "so they can get a meeting or site to discuss how to cut the trees."



This is one of the trees in Mary Judge's front yard on Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, that she stopped Detroit Edison crews from trimming.



When Mary Judge of Farmington Hills returned home after work she found that Detroit Edison had trimmed some of the 50-year-old trees, such as this one, in her front yard.

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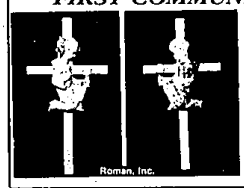

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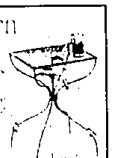

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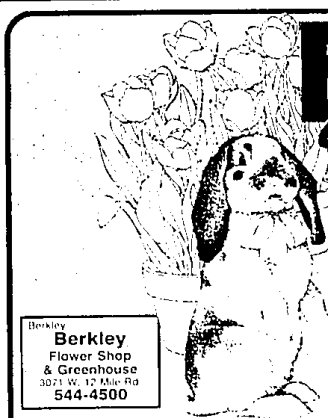

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