

# Salem residents mourn trimmed trees

Written by Tracy Loew Statesman Journal  
Apr. 09

statesmanjournal.com



Trees along 23rd Street SE are being cut by PGE. Officials say it's necessary to prevent power outages.

Trees along 23rd Street SE are being cut by PGE. Officials say it's necessary to prevent power outages.



Trees along 23rd Street SE are being cut by PGE. Officials say it's necessary to prevent power outages.

Purchase Image Zoom

Trees along 23rd Street SE are being cut by

## PGE. Officials say it's necessary to prevent power outages. / DANIELLE PETERSON / Statesman Journal

Salemmites are passionate about their trees.

That passion was displayed in a most public way last spring, when restaurateur David Rosales got arrested after confronting employees at U.S. Bank, which cut down five healthy trees in front of its downtown building.

But a quieter mourning often takes place throughout the city's neighborhoods.

Each day, Portland General Electric has 40 crews out trimming trees from around its 3,800 miles of power lines.

PGE serves an area running from Portland to south of Salem. By law, it must prevent storm-related power outages by keeping limbs away from the lines.

"People understandably like their trees. Sometimes it's difficult to see them trimmed," PGE spokesman Steve Corson said

That was the case on 23rd Street SE this week, where each and every tree on the block got an exuberant trim.

The sight was heartbreaking to Melanie Zermer, who has lived on the street for more than a quarter century.

"In the past, PGE has trimmed the trees in a way that has not changed the look of the canopy much. But today it is different," Zermer said. "What is happening today is a hack job."

One neighbor called the city's urban forester, Jan Staszewski.

"As we wait to hear back, knowing there is little if anything we can do to change the situation, the sound of the chain saws go on," Zermer said. "And the trees are bleeding."

Staszewski surveyed the situation Monday afternoon, and agreed the results are "kind of stunning," but also likely necessary to protect the power lines.

"There is always that kind of balancing act between removing too much and not enough," Staszewski said. "PGE has been a fairly decent partner."

The work in Zermer's neighborhood was especially dramatic because the trees are fast-growing lindens, Corson said. They surround a feeder line that serves several thousand customers.

PGE tries to cut enough that it won't need to come back for two or three years, he said.

"We have to keep trees trimmed at least three feet from our lines," Corson said. "If we just trim them three feet from our lines, we have to come back frequently to keep them at that level."

Zermer said she understands it's a difficult balance.

"I understand their point of view, as sad as this makes me," Zermer said. "I think I just want to acknowledge the pain of the trees."

[tloew@statesmanjournal.com](mailto:tloew@statesmanjournal.com), (503) 399-6779