

## The Utility View

By

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**I**N NEW JERSEY, like many other states, we are confronted with an increase in regulatory agencies stressing environmental protection and concern with the impact of future transmission construction and maintenance on the land use plan.

By way of orientation, Jersey Central/New Jersey Power and Light Company, subsidiaries of General Public Utilities Corporation, supply electrical power to 555,000 customers in a service area representing approximately 43 percent of the State of New Jersey. The two utilities, operating as one company, are composed of six divisions located in the northwestern and east central part of the State.

Prior to 1947 our transmission

right-of-way maintenance program consisted of periodic cutting. This was an expensive and time consuming program. It was decided at this time to experiment with brush control by the use of chemicals and applied by a contractor. This pilot program was so successful both in maintenance results and economics that we decided in 1950 to continue the program on a permanent basis and to place all rights-of-way under chemical management.

Today, approximately 15,000 acres of transmission rights-of-way are under chemical control. Lines are currently under repetitive treatment cycles of from three to six years as the need requires. Basal spray treatment has been the primary application method in the maintenance program.

All chemical applications are selective. Our objective, of course, is to eliminate, within the confines of a right-of-way, certain specified undesirable vegetation, and to promote a stable ground cover of grasses, wild flowers and native low-growing shrubs and trees. To this end we believe that our right-of-way management programs have

*(continued on page 29)*

Permitting trees and other vegetation to grow where utility rights-of-way cross roads provides an effective visual barrier. However, because transmission lines cross many roads, future maintenance must include tree trimming costs. As

more and more visual barrier are permitted and rights-of-ways are allowed to return to more natural vegetation than before, future maintenance will include much hand labor and at a high cost per ROW mile.



**UTILITY VIEW**(from page 12)

been most successful. It is not my intention to burden you with extensive cost figures. You might, however, be interested in one compilation relative to maintenance expenditures. Transmission maintenance cost of acreage treated annually over the period 1960 through 1971 averaged \$54.00 per acre treated.

In addition to the transmission program, over 700 miles of roadside distribution rights-of-way are also under chemical control.

Cooperative activities with municipal, county and state agencies have been an important part of our vegetation management program. We have had the privilege of participating in numerous projects related to soil stabilization, game food and cover plantings, roadside safety, and beautification. Herbicide applications have been made over all types of terrain under diverse soil and drainage conditions, through wild-life areas recreational areas and in close proximity to residential locations.

Acceptance by the general public of our transmission and distribution chemical programs has been most

favorable. We believe this has been largely due to the "selective" approach and timely scheduling of repetitive treatment resulting in the suppression or elimination of unsightly "brown out" areas, in short, aesthetics—and reasonable respect for the property of others. Since most of our transmission rights of way are easements, our contractor attempts to make a "courtesy call" to each property owner before traversing or treating the right of way on his property.

We believe *immediate personal contact* is essential to any spray complaint situation and our ability to reach and inform those questioning the operation has resolved many potential problems.

Objections attributable to the chemical programs over the past 23 years have been minimal, and those that have developed were usually found to be based on misunderstandings. However, the confusing and adverse national publicity of 1969-1970 associated with the use of herbicides did set the stage for a complaint of considerable magnitude.

In July 1970 we were the recipient of a continuing series of news re-

leases, soundly criticizing our work and the use of herbicides in general.

We feel that the use of the controversial herbicide was not the real problem. We are of the opinion that this was used as a tool to stimulate an emotional controversy, was political in origin, and designed to promote continuing newspaper coverage—which it certainly did—all unfavorable to the company image.

Unable to resolve the problem through normal means, and recognizing that defense of the chemical program was mandatory, our Public Information Department arranged a press conference—in order to place the company chemical vegetation management program before the public and in its proper perspective.

We are certainly aware that the activities of the company are under close public scrutiny, and accordingly, have made some changes in the transmission right of way management program. Consideration is given to reducing the repetitive treatment cycle in specific problem areas to further reduce "brown out" potential.

We are also able to customize the chemical applications to better

(continued on page 32)



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### UTILITY VIEW (from page 29)

suit local conditions. For example, heavily populated areas, major recreational areas, camp sites, summer colonies, and similar facilities are treated only during the dormant season.

In 1970 we altered our chemical program to eliminate applications on all existing transmission lines at primary and secondary road crossings to facilitate the return of natural visual barriers at these critical locations.

We believe we have been operating a sensible, well supervised, aesthetically acceptable and safe chemical program. It is our intention to continue the vegetation management maintenance program on the system transmission and distribution rights of way wherever it is inappropriate.

After much public opposition to a proposed 500,000 volt overhead steel tower line, the New Jersey Public Utility Commission, in 1969, gave our neighbor, Public Service Electric and Gas Company, approval to proceed—but six precedent setting requirements had to be met. Essentially these were:

1. Use of available railroad or other existing rights-of-way.
2. Tower locations related to topography to minimize appearance.
3. A program of tower painting designed to minimize effect on surroundings.
4. Where practical, permit special uses of the rights-of-way for farming, recreation, etc.

5. Non-uniform clearing of rights-of-way and retention of a maximum number of trees.

6. Landscaping of conspicuous right-of-way areas.

Our company is also committed to the pursuit of these and similar requirements.

In the past all of our rights of way have been "clear cut," stump sprayed and maintained chemically. Our experience with the new concept of selective clearing is limited to one 230,000 volt right-of-way, 120 feet wide and approximately 11 miles long. The right-of-way was predominantly farm or open land, with some forested areas and hedgerows. Approximately 35% of the right-of-way was wooded. Selective tree removal and/or trimming was undertaken at road crossings and at each end of the forested areas.

We have no way of estimating future maintenance tree trimming costs on this right-of-way. The use of herbicides in future maintenance work on this line is questionable at this time. We cannot, however, consider the line a typical right-of-way experience.

In addition to the right-of-way restrictions imposed by the New Jersey Public Utility Commission, the State of New Jersey enacted the New Jersey Pesticide Control Act of 1971. This Act formulates State policies regulating, among other things, the use of herbicides. Among its shortcomings, municipal ordinances which may be impractical and unrealistic can take precedence over the State Act. To date, this Pesticide Control Act has had no impact

on our vegetation management program.

Approved in 1968, Chapter 245 of the laws of New Jersey authorize municipalities to establish conservation commissions. Their functional range covers:

1. Open Space preservation.
2. Scenic, aesthetic preservation, and beautification.
3. Pollution control.
4. Waste disposal.

There are over 100 active commissions in New Jersey today.

Our experiences to date with municipal conservation commissions involved property owner complaints related to our transmission chemical program. Through our education of these municipal commissions as to the benefits of our chemical program and the proper application of chemicals, the commissions in turn were able to alleviate the fears of the property owners who considered the chemicals dangerous.

A most important regulatory control facing the utility industry in New Jersey today is Chapter 2, New Jersey Air Pollution Control Code—Control and Prohibition of Open Burning. The revised chapter stipulates, among other things, that "plant life" may not be disposed of by open burning. This takes effect January 1, 1973. "Plant Life" includes all vegetation.

Some municipalities have already prohibited all open burning, by local ordinance, in advance of the effective date of this Act.

An all-encompassing solution to the problem of transmission right-of-way tree and brush disposal is

not now known. The alternatives of logging, stacking, burying or chipping are not entirely compatible with selective clearing and trimming.

Elimination of open burning, while reducing air pollution, compounds the problem of refuse disposal. However, the regulation will enhance the minimal clearing requirements versus clear cutting by reducing plant material disposal requirements.

In a few words, let me summarize where we are and where I think we are going in the area of right-of-way maintenance. The rights-of-way presently under chemical maintenance will be permitted to continue as it. The right-of-way requirement of tomorrow will be different than it is today. We presently use 34,000 volt as a subtransmission voltage to feed substations. These lines run cross-country creating many rights-of-way. Tomorrow they will be the distribution voltage in the street and will require maintenance trimming only. The cross-country steel tower line will still be in demand but will make better use of the right-of-way corridors such as railroad rights-of-way, gas transmis-

sion rights-of-way, etc. Where new rights-of-way are created, total clearing will be minimal or non-existent, being replaced by selective removals and line contour trimming. Access roads to and on the right-of-way will be in some cases be non-existent. This all means that right-of-way maintenance will be mostly by trimming and thus very costly.

We are presently negotiating for a 500,000 volt right-of-way across state lands. If successful, we know that tree removal will be very selective, contour tree trimming a must but, most important, it is questionable whether or not we will be able to construct access roads. This means that this portion of the line may be constructed by helicopter and tree trimming done entirely by climbing. The art of right-of-way maintenance is retrogressing.

### Clean Chemical Containers Combat Contamination

What to do with used pesticide containers is the nagging problem that has the chemical industry exploring new methods of packaging materials. But until these new packages are perfected, metal or glass

containers remain a potential contamination hazard to soil and water.

The National Agricultural Chemicals Association (NACA) suggests a procedure based on the techniques used by laboratories to reduce the concentration of material in a container. It's a simple rinse and drain procedure employed at the time the pesticide is placed in the spray tank.

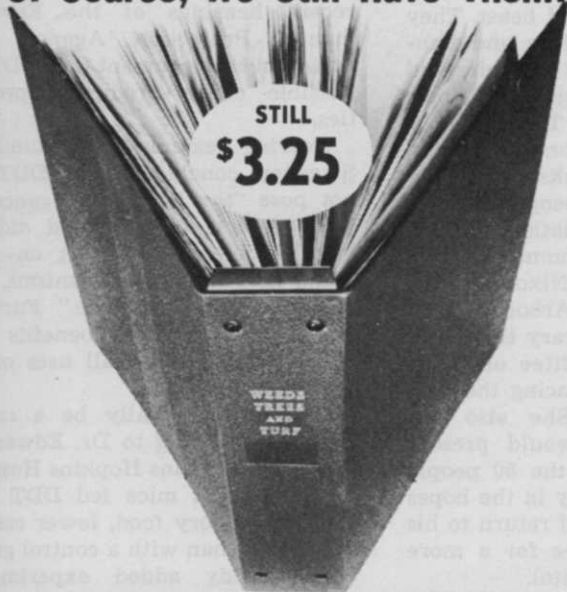
After normal emptying, the container should be allowed to drain in a vertical position for 30 seconds. For best results the container should be rinsed three times, allowing thirty seconds for draining after each rinse, says NACA.

Fill the container one-quarter full with water or other diluting material. Drain each rinse into the spray tank before filling it to the desired level.

Used containers which have been rinsed and drained are ready for disposal by accepted local standards as crushing and burying or by recycling for scrap when appropriate.

For a free instruction sticker to attach to spray equipment, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Safety Division, National Agricultural Chemicals Association, 1155 Fifteenth Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

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