

PONDERA COUNTY

CLEAR ZONE MANAGEMENT POLICY

The concept of a "Forgiving Roadway" is to allow survivability of users when driver error occurs. Drivers do become distracted and vehicles do leave the roadway. The wider and smoother of a recovery area provided, the more a driver has a chance to recover. This recovery area is sometimes referred to as a clear zone. The clear zone also allows the driver to see conflicts (pedestrians, animals, other drivers etc.) and slow down or avoid collision.

The American Association of State and Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) discusses clear zones (AADT <400): At locations where a clear recovery area of 6 ft or more in width can be provided at low cost and with a minimum social/environmental impacts, provisions of such a clear recovery area should be considered. Fixed objects within the clear zone that may be struck by errant vehicles which would in turn injure or kill drivers should be removed or relocated.

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices recommends that signs be placed at least 6 ft from edge of shoulder or 12 ft from traveled way. In order for signs visibility not to be affected, brush, trees and other vegetation should be cleared when they are within 12ft of the roadway or six feet from the shoulder depending on which criteria is used for sign mounting.

The purpose of this policy is to control woody vegetation within Pondera County's road right-of-way. To meet this purpose, the County has authority, in its discretion, to:

1. Cut woody vegetation in the right-of-way which creates a situation that threatens the safety of the traveling public such as:
 - A. Snow traps and/or shading of the road that might occur
 - B. Site distance problems in relation to road signs or intersections
 - C. Conditions that impede the maintenance or improvements to the right-of-way
 - D. Width or height restrictions of vehicles or equipment using the roadway

2. Leave woody materials which have been cut or sprayed to decompose in the right of way.
3. Burn the roadside vegetation to destroy small brush and stimulate desirable vegetation.

Utilizing these methods, the following guidelines will be implemented:

Along all county roads, dirt, gravel and paved, our normal procedure will be to clear the entire right of way width, utilizing level cuts as low as possible, with the following exceptions:

1. Tree and shrubs in house yards, whose bases are inside the right of way line by no more than five feet (5'), may remain, if desired, but limbs must be pruned back to the nearest lateral branch, so that they extend no further than eight feet (8') into the right of way. A written notice of our intended work will be sent or delivered to these properties a minimum of seven (7) days prior to the commencement of our work. This notice will provide the landowner an opportunity to arrange for his/her own trimming and/or to request any larger material for firewood. (Landowner will be responsible for cutting into lengths and removing from ditch.)
2. Side trimming of limbs of trees will be done by pruning them back to no more than eight (8) feet from the right of way line when the tree base is actually outside the right of way.
3. The mechanical brush cutter will be used in rural non-residential areas with small scattered brush and trees where debris will be allowed to lay on slopes. Mechanically cut stumps, larger than eight (8) inches in diameter, as well as those larger trees that are cut totally with chain saws, will be cut flush to the ground, whenever possible. Large side branches will be trimmed to the main trunk or first lateral branch.

Design Options in Order of Preference:

1. Remove Obstacle
2. Delineate Obstacle