
OLR Bill Analysis

SB 950

AN ACT CONCERNING THE REPLACEMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITY POLES AND REVISING VEGETATION MANAGEMENT IN UTILITY PROTECTION ZONES.

SUMMARY

This bill sets a 90-day deadline for utility companies to place their lines and other equipment on a utility pole after it has been replaced.

It also makes it easier for utilities to trim trees near a three-phase main power line by exempting them, under certain circumstances, from requirements to obtain a permit from the local tree warden and consent from certain property owners. Under the bill, a “three-phase main” is the segment of circuit that originates directly from a substation and is protected by a circuit breaker or recloser-type device.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

UTILITY POLES

The bill requires public service companies to place their lines, conduits, cables, wires, and other equipment that they own or operate on a replaced public utility pole within 90 days after (1) an emergency requiring the pole’s replacement or (2) a preplanned pole replacement.

Under the bill, “public service companies” are the investor-owned utility companies generally regulated by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). An “emergency” is (1) a hurricane, tornado, storm, flood, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, drought or fire explosion or (2) an attack causing substantial damage or injury to civilian property or people in the country.

UTILITY TREE TRIMMING

Current law generally requires a utility that plans to prune or remove a tree on municipal property to obtain a permit from the local tree warden (CGS § 23-65(f)). If the tree is outside of the public right-of-way, current law also requires a utility to obtain written affirmative consent from the property owner where the tree is located (CGS § 16-234).

The bill exempts a utility from both of these requirements if any part of the tree is (1) located in the utility protection zone for a three-phase main or (2) part of a hazardous tree that could endanger a three-phase main.

By law, the “utility protections zone” is a rectangular area that extends horizontally for eight feet on either side of an electrical conductor or wire installed on a utility pole, and vertically from the ground to the sky. A “hazardous tree” is a tree, or part of it, that is dead, extensively decayed, or structurally weak, which, if it fell, would endanger utility infrastructure, facilities, or equipment. A “utility” is an investor-owned telephone, telecommunications, or electric distribution company regulated by PURA.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Energy and Technology Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 25 Nay 0 (03/11/2021)