## Living and Working Around Electrical Facilities

Electric utilities design, construct, operate and maintain transmission lines and substation facilities to meet or exceed the requirements of the *National Electrical Safety Code*. These standards provide for the safety and protection of landowners and their property, the general public and utility employees.

Many activities are compatible with transmission line rights of way. For example, certain ranching and farming activities, gardening, various recreational activities and many other uses are permitted as long as care is taken to prevent damage and maintain access to transmission line structures.

No buildings or structures may be erected within the easement because they could impede the safe operation of the line or interfere with access needed for line maintenance. For safety reasons, pumps, wells, swimming pools and flammables must not be placed in the easement area. Properly grounded sprinkler systems are acceptable.

Western also has other requirements for transmission rights of way to maintain system reliability. For example, Western has regulations on vegetation management because trees may grow too close to the transmission line and cause fires or transmission line outages.

## Glossary

**Access Road –** A road used for vehicle travel, usually from a public road to a transmission line corridor or other associated facility. If no suitable road exists, new roads are constructed.

**Appraisal –** A process used by a professional appraiser to interpret facts and judgments into an estimate or opinion of value. These facts include: the interests being acquired, the effect on the remaining property and data obtained from the market, such as comparable sales, costs and income.

**Centerline –** A straight line between points of intersection used for transmission tower alignment.

**Conductor –** The wire cable suspended between transmission towers through which electric current flows.

**Corridor –** A linear strip of land up to three miles wide, in which utility facilities, such as transmission lines, may be located. The corridor is narrowed as additional information and public input is acquired.

**Easement –** A specific strip of land within which a utility has certain rights, as authorized by a written agreement with the property owner or a judgment in condemnation.

**Eminent Domain –** The legal right of a government agency or utility to take private property for public use, with just compensation to the property owner, as determined by a court.

**Environmental Impact Statement –** A report, prepared with input from the public, which identifies and documents the analysis of the environmental impacts of major Federal actions, including reasonable alternatives to the proposed project.

**Land Services Agent –** A Western employee or contractor who is in direct contact with the affected landowner. The land services agent represents Western (1) to obtain permission to enter for conducting pre-construction activities, and (2) to present contracts for easements or other property rights. The land services agent also provides the landowner with information about the type and location of the proposed line, the width of the needed easement, the conditions of the easement and the basis for full payment.

**National Electrical Safety Code –** An American National Standard imposed to safeguard people during the installation, operation or maintenance of electric supply and communications lines and their associated equipment.

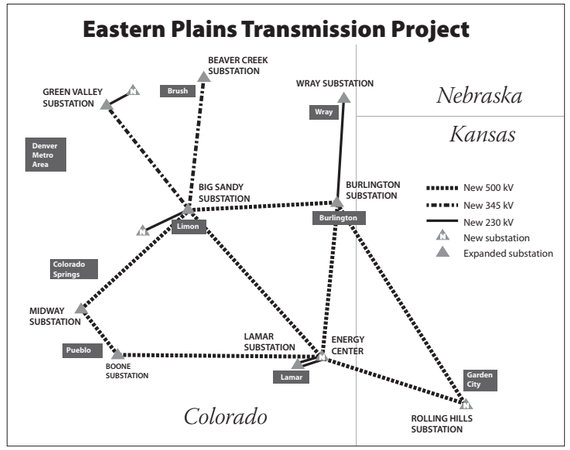
**National Environmental Policy Act –** An act passed by Congress in 1969 requiring Federal agencies to consider possible environmental impacts of most large projects. NEPA requires preparation of an environmental impact statement on actions that may significantly affect the quality of the environment.

**Right of way –** The strip of land where a transmission line or its access roads are located.



WORKING WITH LANDOWNERS

# Eastern Plains TRANSMISSION PROJECT




Electricity plays a vital role in our lives. As electric power requirements increase, utilities must periodically construct new transmission lines and substations or upgrade existing lines. To build and maintain these facilities, utilities acquire certain rights on private and public property.

The Eastern Plains Transmission Project is such a project. It is a 1,000 plus-mile, high-voltage series of transmission lines that would extend between planned new generation in southeast Colorado and Kansas to the Front Range of Colorado along with related substation improvements.

The proposed project would increase transmission capacity in southeast Colorado by 1,800 megawatts, diversify power resources and provide more reliable and economical service to electric utility customers.

Environmental analysis of the project will begin in summer 2006. The analysis will include studies to assess biological, cultural and other environmental resources and visual and land use impacts. After Western completes the environmental analysis, Western will then determine whether to participate in the project and, if so, will decide how to proceed. If Western elects to proceed, under the current schedule, construction would start in fall 2008 to allow the lines to be energized in phases beginning in 2010 through 2011. Easement acquisition would precede construction.

This brochure describes many of the activities involved in building and maintaining the proposed transmission lines. It explains how easements or other property rights would be acquired and describes activities during the construction and operation that may affect you as a landowner. Western Area Power Administration would acquire the property rights required for the EPTP under Federal property acquisition guidelines (the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970). Italicized terms in this brochure are defined in the glossary.

To learn more about the proposed project and find out how you can be involved, visit the EPTP Web site at **http://www.wapa.gov/transmission/eptp.htm**.

For more information on any of the topics discussed in this brochure, call or write:

**Ms. Carey Ashton**
Realty Officer
Western Area Power Administration
P.O. Box 3700
Loveland, CO 80539
1-888-826-4710
eptp@wapa.gov

Western AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION

# How Easements Would Be Obtained

After Western finishes the Environmental Impact Statement that identifies and reports on the impacts from this proposed project, it will make a decision whether or not to move forward. If Western determines it will take part in the Eastern Plains Transmission Project, Western will begin the work to acquire the necessary land rights and complete the planning work needed before construction would start.

### Survey Work

Once the preferred transmission line route is identified, a specific *centerline* would be located. A combination of aerial surveys, environmental and engineering field studies and geologic investigations would be needed to select tower sites and to design the tower foundations. Towers would be located at specific sites to satisfy structural design criteria, maintain adequate line-to-ground clearance and minimize impacts to the property being crossed.

### Land Services Agent

If you own land potentially crossed by the proposed project which needs to be surveyed or tested, a *land services agent* representing Western would contact you to explain the steps involved in route and tower site selection, land acquisition and construction. If any proposed construction activities interfere with your land use, the land services agent would discuss your needs and try to accommodate your requests.

The land services agent would also request permission to enter your property to conduct surveys and studies. The surveys and studies would be performed by people who are under contract with Western. The work would be done in a way that minimizes any foreseeable disturbances to you and your property. However, should any damage to crops, fences or other property occur as a result of these surveys and studies, you would be compensated or the damage would be repaired.

### Acquiring Easements and Other Property Rights

New property rights ranging from 100-feet to 200-feet wide would be acquired for the transmission line. In addition, property rights for access roads, typically 30-feet wide would be acquired to access the transmission line. These property rights, called *easements* or *rights of way*, would be needed to construct, operate and maintain the proposed transmission line. They would be purchased through negotiations with landowners at fair market value, based on an independent appraisal. The landowner would retain title to the land and may continue to use the property in ways that are compatible with the transmission line. (See "Living and Working Around Electrical Facilities" on page 4.)

The process to compensate landowners for easements acquired for the project starts with *appraisals*. Appraisals determine the fair market value of the required easements. Appraisals are prepared by a qualified real estate appraiser. An appraiser determines the value of the easement by customary appraisal methods, including careful analysis of any available market data and comparable sales, and by taking into consideration the rights being acquired from the landowner. The appraiser would contact the landowners and invite them to accompany the appraiser during property inspection. Landowners could then identify any property features and uses believed to be of importance in determining the value of the easement.

Landowners would be presented with a written offer, based on the appraised value, and a contract to purchase the required easements. Western's land services agent would explain the contract and discuss the basis for payment. Western makes every effort to obtain an agreement that is fair and reasonable to both parties.

Once the conditions of the agreement are met, the transactions are processed as efficiently as possible. Western would make full payment for easements to landowners and pay all fees for recording the easement and any title insurance.

### Eminent Domain

Western makes every effort to acquire the necessary easements through successful negotiations with landowners. If negotiations should fail, easements can be acquired through *eminent domain* (condemnation) proceedings. Federal and state laws enable public agencies to acquire, through the courts if necessary, property rights for facilities to be built in the public interest.

Eminent domain proceedings are only used if an agreement cannot be reached or if there are title matters that do not allow for a clean transfer of the necessary land rights. Through the eminent domain process, a court determines the just compensation to be paid to the property owner.



# How the Proposed Project Would Be Built and Operated

### During Construction

Transmission lines would be built in four stages: 1) preparing the right of way, 2) installing tower foundations, 3) assembling and erecting towers, and 4) stringing *conductors*. Work would be performed by construction contractors on Western's behalf. Contractors would be restricted to the area within the acquired transmission line easements, *access roads* and staging areas.

Western's land services agent would advise landowners of the construction schedule. Reasonable attempts would be made to take into account the use and condition of the land, such as planting, irrigation and harvest schedules, to minimize any inconvenience.

Preparing the right of way for construction may require gates and culverts be installed, vegetation cleared, trees trimmed or removed and structures removed that reduce adequate ground clearance for the conductors or access to the right of way. It may also be necessary to build access roads in hilly terrain.

Tower footing foundations would be constructed by digging or drilling holes, which are filled with steel-reinforced concrete. Steel tower components would then be transferred to the site and assembled. Completed towers would be raised by a crane or helicopter and attached to their foundations.

Finally, transmission conductors would be installed. Trailers containing reels of conductor cable would be placed along the route. The conductor cables would be pulled from the reels through pulleys on the towers. After the conductor cables are positioned, they would be suspended from the towers on insulators.

### After Construction

Construction crews would minimize potential damage and clean up the right of way after work is completed. Before the last crew leaves, all work areas and access roads not required for line maintenance would be restored, as nearly as practical, to their previous condition. Construction refuse and scrap material would also be removed.

Landowners would be compensated for crop and property damage that occurs as a result of construction or maintenance of the transmission line. If a landowner believes that damage has occurred and has not been recognized, he or she should contact Western's land services agent.

### Maintenance

After the line is energized, maintenance crews would periodically inspect, repair and maintain its components. Transmission lines are inspected from the air and on the ground. Aerial inspections from helicopters and small aircraft are routinely performed, particularly after wind, ice or lightning storms. Ground inspections are usually performed annually to detect items needing repair or replacement that are not found by aerial inspections.

## How the Route Would Be Selected

A number of factors influence the transmission line route selection process. These include environmental impacts, engineering, land use patterns, economics, electrical requirements and reliability and existing electric transmission facilities.

The public's ideas and concerns play an integral and important role in the planning process. Before any decision is made, public meetings will be held to give citizens and local governments an opportunity to express their views and influence the decision. The public will also be encouraged to send written comments. In addition, newsletters will be published periodically to keep the public up to date on the status of the project studies.

Through detailed analyses and public review, potential locations for the line would be gradually narrowed from a large regional study area, to alternative *corridors*, to alternative routes. The alternative routes determined to be the most suitable would be analyzed and compared in an *Environmental Impact Statement* to meet the requirements of the *National Environmental Policy Act*. The EIS provides the basis for deciding whether to approve the project, and, if so, which route to select for the transmission line.