

Decommissioning Transmission Lines



Decommissioning Lines

The Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) is mandated by the Alberta government to plan Alberta's electricity system. When the AESO determines that a new transmission line is needed to meet increasing electricity demands, or power lines need to be replaced because they have reached end-of-life conditions, **the AESO may direct ATCO Electric to decommission a transmission line.**

ATCO Electric contacts landholders in the vicinity of the decommissioning project to discuss the project schedule and activities to be performed. Any activities to occur on private property will be undertaken in consultation with landholders in the area. Prior to initiating any decommissioning work, ATCO Electric must obtain approval for the project from the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC).

ALBERTA ELECTRIC SYSTEM OPERATOR (AESO)

Determines need for decommissioning. Directs ATCO Electric to decommission line and to prepare a facilities application for the AUC to consider.

ATCO ELECTRIC

Prepares a facilities application for the Alberta Utility Commission's (AUC) consideration. Applies to the AUC for approval to decommission the transmission line.

ALBERTA UTILITIES COMMISSION (AUC)

Reviews facilities application in a public process. The final decision on the approval of a facilities application is made by the AUC.

Decommissioned transmission lines may be retained and converted to use as a distribution line, or removed and the right-of-way reclaimed. Conversion of transmission lines into distribution lines helps to keep Alberta's electricity costs and environmental impacts down by reducing the need to build new distribution lines.

Conversion to Distribution

When a transmission line is decommissioned and converted to use as a distribution line, reclamation of the right-of-way does not occur as the line will be retained for use as a distribution line. The conductor wire and structures remain in place and are used for distributing electricity to area homes and businesses. The voltage carried through the distribution line will be lower than the voltage carried through the transmission line.

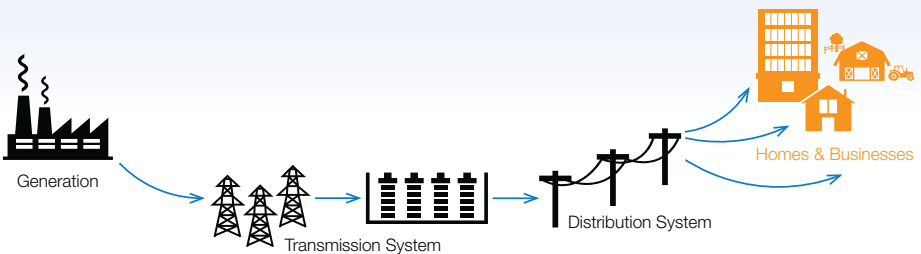
Removal & Reclamation

When a transmission line is decommissioned and is not converted to another use, the decommissioning typically includes the removal of all infrastructure if it is no longer required, or has reached end-of-life conditions. Removed parts will be re-used, recycled or disposed of using ATCO Electric's waste minimization and disposal practices. Following removal of the line, the right-of-way will be restored to the surrounding land use. This process often includes filling in pole locations with gravel, clean fill and topsoil, replacing topsoil and restoring the contours of the landscape.

Did You Know...

Transmission and distribution are terms used to describe different parts of Alberta's electric system.

- **TRANSMISSION** refers to the process of transporting electricity from power generation plants (where it is produced) to substations where the electric power voltage is stepped down and lowered. Once the substations have lowered the electric power voltage to 25-kV or less, the electricity is then transferred to distribution lines.
- **DISTRIBUTION** is the process of moving the lower voltage electricity from substations to homes, schools, farms, hospitals and businesses via distribution lines.



Questions & Answers

The following are common questions ATCO Electric receives about transmission line conversion, decommissioning and reclamation of right-of-ways.

Q: What will happen to my annual structure payments from ATCO Electric when a line is decommissioned?

A: Under current legislation, when a transmission line is decommissioned and either removed or converted to a distribution line, annual structure payments are no longer required. **Annual structure payments from ATCO Electric do not continue following decommissioning of the transmission line.**

Q: If ATCO Electric converts the line to a distribution line, will the structures change?

A: There might be changes to the structures, but those changes are typically minor in nature.

Q: If the line is converted to a distribution line, will I still have structures on my land?

A: Yes. However, the function of the structures will change from transmission to distribution.

If the structures are on your land, this means that you could have improved access to electricity. For landholders looking to expand or develop their land and bring in electricity with new distribution lines on their property, this can result in significant cost savings.

Q: What about birds and other wildlife? Will they be impacted?

A: Decommissioning and reclamation activities are all carried out in accordance with Alberta's *Environmental Protection Guidelines for Transmission Lines*. Measures to be taken to address environmental and wildlife concerns are identified through environmental protection planning and in consultation with landholders and agencies.

Q: Will the regional power supply be interrupted?

A: Transmission lines are only decommissioned once they have been replaced by new infrastructure or are deemed redundant. This helps to ensure that the regional power supply is not interrupted. There may, however, be a temporary outage.

Q: Are there any restrictions on the use of a right-of-way after it has been reclaimed?

A: No. Generally speaking, any agreements that ATCO Electric had entered into with the landholder regarding use of the land for the right-of-way will end when the right-of-way is no longer used for transmission line facilities. If required, agreement terms will be paid out.

Q: How will the holes in the ground be filled?

A: To minimize settling and ensure soil compaction, holes will be filled with gravel or sand up to the topsoil layer. The holes are then capped with clean topsoil and returned to surrounding land use.

Q: What happens to the poles and other transmission line materials?

A: ATCO Electric recycles and reuses poles and transmission line materials whenever possible. When we dispose of waste, we only use waste handlers and landfills that meet ATCO Electric standards. All infrastructure and materials that are no longer required, or have reached end-of-life conditions, are removed. Parts will be re-used, recycled or disposed of using ATCO Electric's waste minimization and disposal practices.

Q: What happens to the conductor wire?

A: Conductor wires are recycled for their metal content. Due to the thickness and rigidity of the wires, there are few alternate uses for conductor wire. As used conductor wire is unsuitable for reuse in new transmission or distribution lines, it is disposed of according to ATCO Electric's waste minimization and disposal practices.

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Questions & Answers

Q: Will there be damage to the land or crops?

A: It is unlikely that there will be any damage to the land during decommissioning, conversion or reclamation. However, ATCO Electric is responsible for any damages that may occur to crops or private property as a direct result of our work.

During reclamation, ATCO Electric restores the land to the surrounding land use as much as is practical. During the process of decommissioning and removing a line, there may be temporary disturbances to the land.

Q: How will you protect my crops from soil borne disease?

A: At ATCO Electric, we understand that your cropland is your livelihood. We know that protecting your crops from soil-borne disease is a top priority. That's why we make every reasonable effort to contact landowners and follow existing land access agreements **before entering cropland**. We also have standardized, comprehensive equipment cleaning practices in place.

Our equipment cleaning practices have been adopted from the Government of Alberta's *Clubroot Management Plan*. The objective of this plan is to minimize or restrict the movement of soil material containing clubroot spores from an infected field.

Three levels of cleaning are identified: mechanical cleaning, washing and disinfecting – each providing a progressively more intensive level of cleaning that may be applied given a specific circumstance.

For more information on our crop protection plan, visit www.atcoelectric.com.