

MISSOURI CITY RIGHT TREE TRAIL TREE PLANTING EVENT

"PLANT THE RIGHT TREE IN THE RIGHT PLACE"

Remarks prepared for

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HURRICANE IKE – A CATEGORY “TREE” STORM

When Hurricane Ike struck in the night last September 13, who knew he had three million leafy accomplices embedded all over town to help create the largest power outage in Texas history?

Though his hundred-and-ten mile an hour winds were category two, at CenterPoint Energy we call Ike a category “tree” hurricane because of the thousands of trees which fell on our power lines, turning out the lights for over two million customers.

It took an army of five thousand tree trimmers to clear the way for six thousand linemen from CenterPoint Energy and across the continent to restore power to the energy capital of the world.

Hurricane Ike revealed the risks that urban forests can pose to the power supply in a vibrant city such as ours.

We at CenterPoint Energy are your neighbors, and we love trees too. But our first duty is to deliver the electricity that lights your home, powers your TV and computer, and may even energize your car.

While trees can beautify a neighborhood, shade your home, and lower your energy bills, when planted too close to power lines, they can snuff out the lights as well as create a safety hazard.

That’s why CenterPoint Energy is partnering with Missouri City and with you all to bring beauty and energy to Ridgeview Park with the Right Tree Trail.

We’ve been a part of the community for more than one hundred and twenty-five years, and we support our neighbors by contributing to charitable organizations, by encouraging our employees and retirees to volunteer in the community, and through safety and education initiatives.

This weekend, we’ll do it all as we provide these trees and some helping hands along with a lesson on planting the right tree in the right place.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AT CENTERPOINT ENERGY

CenterPoint Energy tracks every power outage on our system. The number one cause of power outages is trees contacting power lines. In fact, seventeen minutes out of every hour without power results from trees on power lines. That's why our degreed foresters work with over one hundred contractor tree crews every day to trim trees away from power lines.

Before Ike, there were three and a half million trees in Houston, and we trim up to a million of them each year to keep them clear of power lines. Since Ike brought down a lot of trees – including right here in this park – we want to help you and our two million other neighbors to plant the right trees in the right place.

In addition to trimming trees and training them to grow away from power lines, CenterPoint Energy plants hundreds of trees each year to replace those that were removed because they were too close to power lines.

Our vegetation management program has been recognized by the National Arbor Day Foundation with its Tree Line USA award and by BASF Professional Vegetation Management with the Project Habitat Award.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

While we are proud of our awards, we know you love your trees. Most folks don't like having their trees trimmed, but we all want to avoid power outages. You can help keep your lights on by planting the right tree in the right place.

Here are some more things to remember:

- At least two business days before you dig, call 811 to locate underground electric, gas, phone and cable lines
- Know the growth potential of your trees and plant them a safe distance from power lines as illustrated on the sign at the front of the trail
- For a list of low-growing trees compatible with power lines – like those we'll plant today – visit our web site at CenterPointEnergy.com/trees.

Speaking of “slash trees,” if you think your trees are too close to power lines, **DON'T TRY TO TRIM THEM YOURSELF!** You could be injured or even **KILLED!**

Only trained professionals authorized by CenterPoint Energy are allowed to trim trees near energized power lines. If you think your trees need to be trimmed away from power lines, give us a call and we'll make an inspection to see if they pose an electric reliability risk or safety hazard.

Planting the right trees in the right place – away from power lines – will replenish our urban forests while reducing CenterPoint Energy's need to trim or remove trees. Proper selection and placement of trees can save you money, avoid a safety hazard, improve electric service and beautify the landscape.

After you plant these trees this weekend, visitors to Ridgeview Park will not just have a prettier park; they'll have a lesson in the peaceful coexistence of nature and electricity. The Right Tree Trail will show the path to urban beauty in a twenty-first century economy.

That's why we are proud to be a part of this event and grateful to our partners in Missouri City and to all you volunteers for sharing your time, your love of nature and your dedication to our community.

Thank you.