

Working with Landowners



Idaho Power strives to provide reliable, responsible, fair-priced energy to more than 489,000 customers within southwestern Idaho and eastern Oregon.

Our Commitment

Transmission paths are critical for bringing much-needed energy to customers throughout the region. When a new transmission line is planned there is an extensive permitting, public involvement, design and construction process.

Idaho Power is committed to working with property owners throughout that process. We understand close coordination with property owners, particularly those whose land is impacted, is essential to the siting process. Once a transmission line route has been identified, we collaborate with affected property owners to determine the best location for the line and identify opportunities to reduce impacts to the property. In addition to conforming to all state and federal requirements when siting the line, we are open to negotiating modifications to the transmission line's original design, such as relocating transmission line towers and access roads, to ensure we create the best outcome for all involved parties.

Rights-of-Way

Idaho Power seeks to acquire rights-of-way for transmission lines through mutual agreements with property owners for the use of their property. The following methods may be used to acquire rights-of-way:

- Permitting
- Easements
- Eminent Domain

As the location for the transmission line route is developed, and the necessary local, state and federal approval processes are under way, Idaho Power begins coordinating with property owners to acquire rights-of-way.

Permitting:

Permitting occurs when Idaho Power applies for a permit to place the facility across public lands. Public lands may include land owned by the state or by federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management and the United States Forest Service.

Easements:

Easements give Idaho Power the right to use land owned by an individual for a specific purpose. Most commonly, Idaho Power negotiates directly with private property owners to determine easement rights and restrictions for using portions of the land that remain owned by the individual.

Because the property is still owned by the property owner, the owner may use the ground within the power line easement as desired, while honoring the negotiated terms of the easement agreement.

For safety reasons, Idaho Power recommends that land owners use caution on easement lands to eliminate the possibility of anything making contact with the transmission line, such as a crane or other tall equipment.

Idaho Power strives to be a community steward and makes every effort to provide fair compensation to property owners for transmission line easements. Easement compensation is made through a one-time payment to the property owner in return for the grant of access to build, operate and maintain the power line. Our experienced right-of-way agents work with each affected property owner to negotiate easement compensation, terms and conditions in a mutually agreeable package.

For more information, please refer to the Compensation discussion below.

Eminent Domain:

Eminent domain is the last resort for acquiring property for a transmission line when all other options have been unsuccessful. It is Idaho Power's practice to pursue, in good faith, the purchase of the condemned property from the property owner. If mutually acceptable terms cannot be agreed upon for an easement across private lands, and the specific property in question is an essential portion of the project and has been deemed as being more beneficial to the public than alternative routes/locations, Idaho Power may request condemnation authority (eminent domain) through the courts. The right of eminent domain and the implementation of condemnation are rarely used by Idaho Power. In fact, we have not exercised eminent domain in over 20 years.


In cases of condemnation, independent appraisers, through the court, will determine a fair price to be paid to the property owner for the land. For more information, please refer to the Compensation discussion below.

Compensation

Property owners are compensated for a right-of-way or easement, regardless of how it is acquired. Idaho Power's right-of-way agents work directly with an affected property owner to negotiate compensation. The value of the right-of-way is determined using several different sources, including the assessor's records, current land value, appraisals of similar properties in the area and local comparable sales. If the acquisition process proceeds through the court, the court determines the compensation value. An appraisal of the property is conducted by an independent, licensed appraiser to determine the estimated fair market value. Based on that appraisal, the court decides the appropriate 'just compensation' to be paid to the property owner.

Right-of-way Use Guidelines

Idaho Power receives requests from property owners, governmental agencies, elected officials and public service providers to use transmission line rights-of-way. Idaho Power routinely works with other public service providers to co-locate facilities, such as water lines and gas pipelines, where possible. Allowable uses for rights-of-way may include: agricultural, such as harvesting, grazing and irrigation; temporary structures; fences; plants; and roadway crossings. Other right-of-way uses may be allowed unless those uses obstruct or impair Idaho Power's access for maintaining the transmission line and right-of-way in accordance with the right-of-way agreement.

A photograph of a rustic wooden fence in a vast, open field. The fence is made of weathered wooden posts and rails, with several strands of barbed wire. The field is filled with dry, golden-brown grass. In the distance, a range of mountains with patches of snow is visible under a clear blue sky. The lighting suggests a bright, sunny day.

Public involvement throughout the entire siting and environmental review process is an essential component of this informed decision-making effort.

Transmission Lines and Property Values

Many factors affect market prices of real estate, including availability of water and sewer service; proximity to community facilities, such as schools, medical facilities and parks; transportation accessibility; lot size; highest and best use of land; age and condition of property structures; and current market conditions.

A recent study, "High-Voltage Transmission Lines: Proximity, Visibility, and Encumbrance Effects" published in *Appraisal Journal* (Summer 2009), found no evidence of decreases in land values for properties located near power lines or with views of power lines; however, it did find that there is a small negative effect to properties containing easements. Additionally, land valuation studies conducted for western states have shown land and housing values associated with the presence of power lines to remain consistent with that of surrounding property.

Transmission lines have existed for decades and are part of our landscape. They are present in agricultural lands, residential areas, parks and other public lands, commercial and industrial areas and in urban environments. For this reason, other factors typically have a more significant role when determining the market value of a property.

Operations and Maintenance

Landowners can restrict right-of-way access on their property; however, an easement allows Idaho Power employees to access the line at any time to operate and maintain it. Fences, locks or other access restrictions can be used by property owners along acquired rights-of-way.

Idaho Power inspects transmission lines twice a year and substations are inspected monthly. Safety inspections are performed by an inspector on foot, in a four-wheel drive vehicle or from the air using a helicopter. Standard maintenance requires access to the line using specialized equipment to allow safe and efficient repair of the facility. Emergency maintenance may require access on an as-needed basis to promptly repair or replace any damaged or missing equipment.

Access routes, determined in cooperation with the property owner and Idaho Power, are used to access the facilities for inspections and emergency maintenance.

Environmental Review

An important step to the transmission line siting process is for the project to undergo the state and/or federal environmental review process. This process is conducted to ensure the project meets state and federal requirements, as well as to obtain rights-of-way and permits. Depending on the project location, a state and/or federal agency conducts an environmental review to analyze potential effects of the proposed project on resources, such as wildlife and land use, throughout the project area. A document is prepared after data has been collected and the potential effects to area resources have been analyzed. The environmental document is made available to the public for review and comment. The document, which includes a summary of input from the public, agencies and other stakeholders, serves as the basis for the agency's decision whether to approve the project and issue permits to Idaho Power.

As part of the environmental review process, Idaho Power may request permission to enter private properties potentially affected by the proposed transmission line to conduct studies and collect data. Examples of resources that may be evaluated include: terrestrial and aquatic wildlife, water resources, soils, air quality, historic and cultural resources, and the location of community features such as parks and schools.

Field Studies

Collecting data on existing natural, cultural, physical and human resources is crucial to the environmental review process, selection of route(s), and engineering of the line. Field studies and other data collection efforts are conducted within the project study area to help the project team understand existing conditions and evaluate potential impacts that the proposed transmission line may have on area resources.

If your property is within a proposed route, Idaho Power will contact owners for access prior to conducting the work and will supply more information regarding the type of studies being conducted and the fieldwork schedule. This is called "right-of-entry," which provides Idaho Power and its contractors permission to enter private property for the purposes of conducting the required fieldwork.

Fieldwork is a preliminary step Idaho Power takes in transmission line projects and is not an indicator of where the final route will be placed. It simply provides data to help determine a preferred route. Once the final route has been determined, land owners will be provided with additional information if it is expected to cross their property.

Engineering

First and foremost, Idaho Power has an obligation to design our systems to operate safely. The National Electric Safety Code (NESC) is used to develop the appropriate right-of-way width based on a number of factors, such as tower type and height, conductor type, conductor tensions, span length between towers and weather conditions.

A variety of transmission line structure designs may be used for a 500 kV project. The structures may be a combination of steel lattice (for strength) and tubular towers. Average design details include:

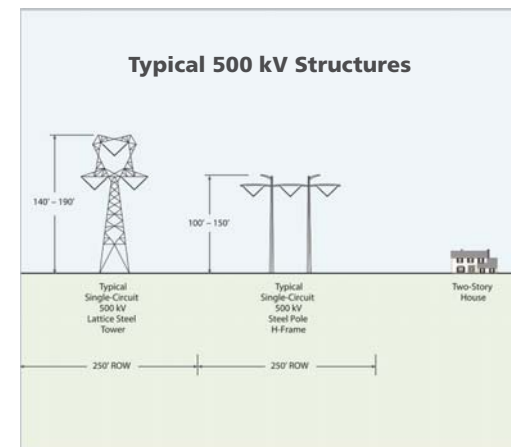
Tower height:
100 to 190 feet

Tower footprint:
40 by 40 feet

Line span:
1,200 to 1,500 feet

Ground clearance:
Minimum of 40 feet

Right-of-way width:
250 feet



Note: Graphic of typical structure. Heights may vary due to terrain and engineering constraints. Other tower types may be used based on local circumstances.



Resources on the Web

Idaho Power Company:

www.idahopower.com

Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Project:

www.boardmantohemingway.com

Gateway West Transmission Project:

www.gatewaywestproject.com

Idaho Public Utilities Commission:

www.puc.state.id.us

Oregon Public Utility Commission:

www.puc.state.or.us

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