



JARRAFF
Industries, Inc.

ROW MAINTENANCE

4x4 JARRAFF

Customer Service Standards Reach New Heights at Carroll Electric

Since 1937, Carroll Electric, Berryville, Ark., has been dedicated to providing northwest Arkansas and southwest Missouri with “safe, reliable electricity at the lowest possible cost.” For more than seven decades this dedication has spurred the Carroll Electric team to explore every avenue that would allow them to better serve the cooperative’s members, including the addition of new services. In 1982 the cooperative chose to employ an in-house tree and brush service that would fully comprehend the needs of its members.

According to Rex Hendrix, right-of-way manager of Carroll Electric, “Our crews most definitely have the interest of all of our members in mind as they perform our work.” Each crew member is trained by a certified arborist on how to employ proper pruning techniques. This dedication is recognized by the community the crews serve. “We have had several members request that we have our in-house right-of-way crews do the work on their property versus contractors,” Hendrix said.

Employing an in-house crew also streamlines communication. The communication process between the cooperative’s departments is much more efficient and effective than it would be with an outside contractor. Hendrix said, “[Each department’s] efforts complement each other. Our [ROW] crews can prepare right-of-ways for the next step, which is our construction crews coming in to build the lines. It allows everybody to be on the same page and prevents lost time.”

In addition to the proper removal and trimming of trees, Carroll Electric’s crews work to educate members about power line safety. This includes teaching people about the hazards of utility lines and explaining where and where not to plant trees.

Continual Growth

When Carroll Electric began handling tree trimming in-house, the team consisted of three crew members. In a continual effort to

provide its customers with better service, the cooperative has been steadily increasing the amount of ROW maintenance it handles in-house. In order to manage the increased trimming responsibilities, Carroll Electric has gradually added crew members and equipment for the past 25 years.

Today, 60 crew members handle 70 percent of the cooperative’s ROW needs in 11 counties. The cooperative’s service area spans over 2,800 square miles, bringing electricity to 68,000 members. Carroll Electric’s ROW crews work to trim 9,000 miles of power lines every five years. They also return to several trouble areas each year to clear storm damage or re-trim trees that grow more quickly than normal.

In addition to the Carroll Electric crews, contractors are employed to handle the work that the in-house crews do not manage. Hendrix said, “With the new equipment we are putting in place we are hoping to narrow that gap and do more of it in-house as we progress.”

Customer Service Tools

The cooperative’s equipment complement has grown from two buggy trucks and a tractor to a 35-unit arsenal made up of three Jarraff All-Terrain Tree Trimmers (Jarraff Industries, St. Peter, Minn.), four mechanical trimmers, eight ground clearing machines, four Geo-Boy Brush Cutter Tractors (Geo-Boy, St. Peter, Minn.), and 16 right-of-way bucket trucks with chippers.



The Jarraff All-Terrain Tree Trimmer keeps Carroll Electric’s crew members safely on the ground while the trimmer’s fiber glass boom reaches cutting heights up to 75 feet.

PROJECT PROFILE:

Contractor: Carroll Electric

Location: Berryville, Ark.

Equipment Used: Jarraff 4 Wheel Drive All-Terrain Tree Trimmer & GEO-BOY Brush Cutter Tractor

Specifications: Row Maintenance in 11 counties

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Carroll Electric's vegetation management crews clear right-of-ways, making way for its construction crews to come in and build utility lines.

This equipment allows Carroll Electric crews to remain committed to their mission. They are able to maintain ROWs efficiently, keeping costs low and electricity flowing. "One trimmer has proven, on average, to take the place of five bucket trucks in rural areas, reducing the amount of man hours and labor for hand climbers and ground crews," said Hendrix. The Geo-Boy also contributes to the mission in that it keeps community members safe while providing them with uninterrupted power. "The [Geo-Boy] bull hog has a minimal amount of debris thrown from it during operations. This greatly improves public safety and reduces the chance of property damage," Hendrix said.

In order to effectively serve Carroll Electric's members, the equipment must be maintained and kept in working order. To do so, the operators are trained to properly maintain the equipment and make minor repairs. The cooperative also employs four mechanics at a garage in Berryville, Ark. and two at a smaller garage in Bentonville, Ark. These mechanics handle most of the major repairs.

When more difficult maintenance questions arise, the cooperative relies on the equipment manufacturers. Hendrix said, "[Jarraff's staff] can lead you to any problem that you may have. They can help you diagnose it on the phone, they know exactly what part you need and, in most cases, they can have that part to you by the next day. On a couple of occasions, we've been stumped on some issues and they've never failed to fly down and get out in the field with us to correct the issues."

Safety is Key

The importance of safety is deeply seeded within Carroll Electric, not only the safety of its customers but of its crews as well. "We have an in-house safety coordinator that comes in and puts on different classes and helps us with all this training," Hendrix said. All of the employees are required to go through an Electrical Hazard Awareness Program in order to become certified to clear vegetation around power lines. Beyond the initial training, crews attend safety meetings each month. These meetings cover everything from electrical safety to driver's safety.

Aside from basic power line safety training, crews are also trained on how to use the equipment that the cooperative employs in the field. "We train our operators by utilizing the manufacturer's representatives to come in and make sure that we understand the equipment that we use and that we are able to maintain it in a safe fashion," Hendrix said.

"The safety of our customers is a top concern, which is why we work so closely with them to help them utilize our equipment safely and effectively. Working with Carroll Electric is great because not only are they very conscientious about maintenance and safety, but they also have great communication within the company, which ensures that everyone is well informed," said Heidi Boyum, president of Jarraff Industries.

As an in-house vegetation management crew at an electrical cooperative, the employees are exposed to additional safety training. Hendrix said, "They are involved in all of our lineman safety meetings. We try to make sure that they are very educated on electrical safety."

It is also important that any contract crews that are brought in to handle a portion of Carroll Electric's work be held to the same safety standards as the in-house crews. The key to achieving this is communication. Contract crews go through an orientation process to make sure they understand the voltage they will be dealing with. Carroll Electric also provides the crews with any additional safety equipment they may need to perform the job safely. While the crews are in the field a trained journeyman lineman from Carroll Electric serves as a team leader to ensure that everyone is working safely.

Storm Restoration Challenge

Carroll Electric makes it their mission to serve its customers in every situation. This was illustrated during the severe northern Arkansas Ice Storm in January 2009. The in-house right-of-way crews teamed up with several crews from other states to help minimize outage times and restore power to the cooperative's members.

One of the biggest issues during this ice storm was accessing the power lines. "We normally try to get assessment crews out ahead of time to assess the damage before we can actually get our trucks to the areas of need. Our assessment crews during this ice storm had to carry chain saws to cut the trees and clear the roads before they could even get to the power lines," Hendrix said.

The ice storm caused residual problems for four to five days after the initial storm had hit. Crews would cut their way in to repair the power lines and then had to turn around and cut their way out again.

During the January 2009 ice storm, as with all of Carroll Electric's work, safety was the first priority. Hendrix said, "We want our crews to slow down and double check all of their safety equipment before they begin the work."

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After the January 2009 ice storm Carroll Electric's in-house trimming crews worked with crews from other states to quickly restore power to its members.

The equipment employed by Carroll Electric also proves its worth during storm restoration projects. Hendrix said, "The Jarraff is an off-road machine and the operator has an enclosed cab. The machine can maneuver into areas and allows our crews to continue working with minimal adjustments for the weather. It prevents employees from having to get out and physically do the work in bad conditions."

Just as important as being able to spring into action during an emergency restoration situation, are the preventative measures taken to minimize potential problems during a storm. Properly maintained ROWs ensure that Carroll Electric will be able to better serve their customers rain or shine. "We prepare right-of-ways to withstand small storms and in case of major storms the maintenance plan will help reduce the number of problem trees and help provide faster restoration time," said Hendrix.

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