



Monday, 9 February 2009

POWERCOR CONTINUES RECOVERY FROM VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES

Powercor Australia has completed most of the outstanding restoration works required in the wake of the weekend’s devastating Victorian bushfires.

As CFA officials continue to bring fires under control, Powercor crews are being provided with access to fire affected land to complete electricity reconstruction work.

Fewer than 100 customers remain off supply across Powercor’s distribution network which spans the entire western half of the state.

Of those outstanding customers, most are located in the Bendigo region where power pole replacement works will continue today.

Any Powercor customers still off supply and requiring reconnection to the distribution network are urged to report their outages today.

In addition to bushfires, pole fires and heatwave conditions which impacted approximately 25,000 customers over the weekend, Powercor estimates that about 210,000 customers were affected by three separate periods of load shedding yesterday across northern Victoria in areas from Swan Hill to Shepparton.

Powercor was instructed by NEMMCO to reduce load almost immediately on each occasion in order to protect the security of the overall Victorian electricity network when bushfires threatened transmission lines in northeast Victoria.

The major fire-affected areas were Bendigo (9,000 customers affected), Horsham (8,000), Colibaine (2,500) and Pomborneit. About 600 customers remained off supply at 8pm on Sunday night, most of whom were expected to be restored the same evening. However access difficulties caused by the fires in Bendigo meant a small number of customers would remain off supply until Monday.

The larger fires in northeast Victoria and Gippsland affected the electricity transmission network which supplies Victoria’s distribution networks. High winds and wind shifts required load shedding on three separate occasions on Sunday:-

TIME	AREAS AFFECTED	TOTAL CUSTOMERS AFFECTED	MAXIMUM OUTAGE TIME
0125-0515	All customers between Swan Hill, Kerang, Echuca, Bendigo, Shepparton, and Yarrawonga	118,000	Approx. 90 mins.
1225-1335	Areas in and around	47,000	55 minutes

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	Shepparton, Castlemaine, East Bendigo, Echuca, Kyabram, Yarrawonga, Numurkah		
1610-1705	Areas in and around Shepparton, Bendigo, Charlton, Castlemaine and Maldon	44,000	40 minutes

“Northern Victoria was affected because it is directly supplied by the transmission lines in the northeast affected by bushfires. The impact of the fires also made it impossible to supply the region from other directions,” said Powercor Australia’s Corporate Affairs Manager Hugo Armstrong.

Powercor endeavoured to limit the impact of load shedding on fire fighting areas, and on dairy areas during milking times. Supply was also switched around as much as possible during load shedding periods in order to share the burden among customers.

Mr Armstrong said that planning covering strategies, materials and human resources meant that Powercor’s response to the widespread faults that occurred on its network during the weekend had been timely and efficient.

“We have replaced more than 60 poles and repaired more than 110 individual faults, both large and small. Although access to some fire areas was limited for safety reasons, where possible our field crews worked continuously to assess the damage and complete repairs, in difficult conditions and in some locations throughout Saturday night,” he said.

Powercor acknowledged the strong cooperation between all emergency services in responding to one of the worst crises in the state’s history, and also the support of the public.

Works will continue today to restore the last areas off supply and also to continue to check the network and undertake further replacements and repairs to restore equipment that may have been weakened by the weekend’s events.

Ends

Media inquiries: CitiPower and Powercor’s 24-hour media service on 9683 4342.