



06 July 2021

Stawell bushfire safety technology passes first test

Stress-testing of the power network has taken place this week as part of the installation of advanced technology in Stawell to reduce the risk of bushfires started from the electricity network in the area.

Powercor crews have spent more than five months on the project to upgrade the Stawell Zone Substation and hundreds of sites in the wider region to prepare the network for the new device, known as a Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiter (REFCL).

The Stawell REFCL will protect 537 kilometres of powerlines, including in Stawell, Pomonal, Halls Gap, Landsborough, Rupanyup, Dadswell's Bridge, Minyip and surrounds.

The REFCL will protect these powerlines by acting like a giant safety switch, reducing voltage levels within milliseconds to mitigate the risk of fire if a tree strikes powerlines or lines hit the ground.

Testing took place on Monday 5 July and was successful, marking a major milestone for the bushfire mitigation project.

Powercor Manager REFCL Program Delivery Andrew Bailey said having REFCL technology at Stawell represented a huge leap forward in terms of bushfire safety for the local network.

"Stawell is Powercor's 17th zone substation to be fitted with REFCL technology, and there's no doubt these devices are keeping communities safer," Mr Bailey said.

"The testing this week is the first phase of commissioning in the delivery of this important project for Stawell.

"It allows us to validate the network upgrades to support the safety device. The next phase will confirm that the REFCL is operating in line with the performance levels we require."

Powercor is on track for its scheduled rollout of REFCL devices across central and western Victoria, which is due for completion in 2023 as per the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission (VBRC) recommendations.

Powercor has completed its other VBRC commitments, including the installation of more than 1,200 enhanced Automatic Circuit Reclosures (ACRs), 220,000 armour rods and vibration dampers and 1,800 line spacers.

For more information about REFCLs visit <https://www.powercor.com.au/safety/bushfire-mitigation-program/rapid-earth-fault-current-limiter/>

For more information call Powercor's media line on (03) 9683 4342



Background – Powercor

Powercor moves electricity to and from more than 843,000 homes and businesses across the western suburbs of Melbourne and through central and western Victoria to the South Australian and New South Wales borders.

Our network is made up of almost 90,000 kilometres of wires and more than 588,000 poles and associated infrastructure, and supports 11,200 medium, commercial and industrial businesses and 106,500 small businesses.

Powercor is playing a critical role in supporting Victoria's clean energy transition. More than 1765MW of solar, wind and other renewable generation is connected to our network, which is home to four of Victoria's Renewable Energy Zones, while 21 per cent of Powercor's residential customers are benefitting from rooftop solar.

We are at the forefront of finding innovative ways to support Victoria's energy transition through projects and trials investigating community batteries, smart charging for electric vehicles, and microgrids and other community energy projects.

Our teams operate from 13 depots, our Bendigo-based customer contact centre and our CBD headquarters, to deliver reliable, safe and affordable electricity by operating, managing and maintaining all network assets and metering services. This means managing a network that is reliable and safe, particularly in relation to bushfire risks.

For more information call Powercor's media line on (03) 9683 4342