

Friday, 26 February 2021



Powercor to test new bushfire safety device at Terang

Testing will take place next week on cutting edge technology installed in Terang to reduce the risk of bushfires started from the electricity network in the area.

Powercor crews have spent more than 12 months on the \$27 million project to upgrade the Terang Zone Substation and more than 1,100 sites in the wider region to prepare the network for the new device, known as a Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiter (REFCL).

The upgrade has almost doubled the size of the Terang Zone Substation, with an additional 5,000 tonnes of new soil trucked-in to support the build.

More than 200 localised planned outages were required to allow crews to safely conduct upgrades in what was a very wet year, with crews at times needing to use specialist vehicles to access poles and other network equipment in wet, boggy conditions.

When complete, the Terang REFCL will protect powerlines in an area of about 2,500 square kilometres, reaching as far north as Chatsworth, west to Caramut, south to Port Campbell and east to Scotts Creek.

Testing will begin on Monday 1 March and may last several days. No power outages are planned for the tests, but crews are in place to respond if unplanned outages occur.

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

“Terang will be Powercor’s sixteenth 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 final phase in the delivery of this important project for Terang. It allows us to validate the network upgrades to support the safety device and confirm that the REFCL is operating in line with the performance levels we require.” Mr Bailey said.

“While no outages are planned with this work, we have crews ready to respond quickly and as safely as possible to get power back on to homes and businesses if unplanned outages do happen.”

Terang will be one of five locations in the region to be protected by a REFCL, with devices already installed in Camperdown, Colac and Koroit and construction work starting later this month on a device at Hamilton.

When all South-West devices are completed, a network of 5,573km of high voltage powerlines will be protected, including 28 feeder lines covering 50,000 customers.

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/>

ENDS

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



Background – Powercor

Powercor distributes electricity to 850,000 customers across the western suburbs of Melbourne and through central and western Victoria to the South Australian and New South Wales borders. Electricity is distributed in the region via a network comprising over 88,400 kilometres of wires, supported by more than 577,420 poles and associated infrastructure.

Residential households account for 86 per cent of connections. Our customers are dispersed over a wide geographic area in a density of just 12 people per square kilometre.

Our network also supports 11,200 medium, commercial and industrial businesses and 106,500 small businesses dominated by health care and social assistance, agriculture, forestry and fishing. These businesses generate 25 per cent of Victoria's Gross Domestic Product.

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.