

Recent bushfires in South Australia

It has been a sobering Christmas and New Year for South Australians, including many of the team at SA Power Networks, who have been involved in widespread efforts to ensure the safety of the community throughout the recent bushfires across our state. Many of our people worked through the festive season responding to a number of bushfires including at Cudlee Creek and the more recent crisis on Kangaroo Island.

Australia's widespread bushfire crisis has impacted a wide range of emergency services, individuals, families, communities, businesses, and support agencies. In particular, we acknowledge and extend our deepest sympathies to the people who have lost loved ones, homes or properties . For our part, SA Power Networks plays an important role in helping keep our communities safe both in the lead up to fire danger season, on severe and catastrophic fire danger days, and in the aftermath of bushfires.



The article below shares a little more of our experiences throughout the current bushfire situation.

- the Stakeholder Engagement team

2019/20 Bushfire Response

SA Power Networks has a coordinated approach to responding to bushfire impact on our infrastructure. This approach has been developed and refined through experience in various fires, most recently at Sampson Flat and Pinery.

The safe restoration of power to customers is always our priority.

Safety takes many forms. In the case of the bushfire affected areas, including Cudlee Creek and Kangaroo Island, initial access to firegrounds to inspect the damage to assets and infrastructure can only proceed after permission from the Country Fire Service (CFS). Once access is granted crews are aware that flare-ups still occur within these settings, not only delaying our work, but on at least two occasions in the Adelaide Hills, and one on Kangaroo Island, forcing the evacuation of crews.



Hot spots and still-burning or smouldering trees pose additional risk to workers – who at times have downed tools in order to extinguish flames.

The potential for trees, or significant limbs, to fall is also an ongoing risk, with specialist teams deployed in a bid to identify and remove at-risk trees (in conjunction with other agencies).



SA Power Networks sits side-by-side with emergency services in the Zone Emergency Support Team (ZEST) which is responsible for the coordination of local resources, including helping critical infrastructure get back online as soon as safe to do so.

Crews begin each day with a safety briefing, highlighting issues from the previous day, ongoing risks or any new matters that have arisen. They are reminded of the need to drive with care, to

consider their own safety, take breaks, drink enough water and to reflect on key issues such as fatigue management.



While on the ground to perform a vital role in restoring power, the teams that assess, plan and then physically fix or replace the Stobie poles, wires, transformers and other assets, are also exposed to the destruction, smoke, ash and tragedy that is all around them.

Our crews deal with confronting scenes of families and farmers who have lost everything or have significant damage to their property. Also the presence of injured, burnt or dead native animals and livestock cannot be overlooked. As much as any other group of first responders, our teams on the ground witness things that can never be unseen.

Among the crisis response provided by SA Power Networks is chaplaincy and care support to help our employees manage this stress.

Meanwhile our representatives attend community meetings to keep all informed, call centre staff handle phone and online enquiries and communications staff are busy updating social media platforms, the mainstream media and other stakeholders. All are working together in a bid to ensure timely, factual information and prompt service to support the path to recovery.

At Cudlee Creek many workers from across the organisation volunteered to work on Christmas Day and over the holiday period to help with the reconnection process for those affected.



To support Kangaroo Island, many additional crews have travelled from the mainland, leaving behind their own families. Damage found in the Kangaroo Island firegrounds has ranged from more than 12 kilometres of downed overhead powerlines to fire-damaged transformers, service lines and other equipment. It is difficult to determine exactly how long it will take to repair the damage caused by the bushfires, but we will continue to rebuild until the Island's supply is completely restored.

On behalf of everyone here at SA Power Networks, we'd like to express our thanks in particular to the communities in the Adelaide Hills and on Kangaroo Island for the kindness and care shown to our people in the field – whether it is a bottle of water, a meal, time and energy or a simple 'thanks'.

Thank you too to those who have left messages of support on our social media pages and via our call centre. Every act of kindness – especially from those that have lost so much – does not go unnoticed and helps to keep our teams' spirits buoyed.

SA Power Networks is proud to work side-by-side with all emergency services with the focus on safe restoration of power to support people and communities impacted by bushfire.

Review of Port Lincoln Power Network

To maintain electricity supply to Port Lincoln during catastrophic fire conditions, we are conducting a full assessment of the network and infrastructure in and around the city.

The powerlines that supply Port Lincoln run through the high risk bushfire area in the Lower Eyre Peninsula before entering the town. On three occasions last year, the 33,000 Volt supply lines to the area were disconnected to protect lives and property in catastrophic fire conditions.

In late November, our CEO wrote an open letter to all Port Lincoln residents. At the time, Rob gave an undertaking that SA Power Networks would examine whether investment in network upgrades or reconfiguration would allow power to be retained to the core of Port Lincoln in catastrophic or extreme fire conditions. That review began immediately, and an initial scoping project is due for completion around the end of this month.

The full review will require an extensive and detailed engineering assessment and ongoing communication with stakeholders and the community of Port Lincoln. At this stage though, we are hoping to complete the project before the 2020/21 Fire Danger Season.

Further information will be released as it becomes available.

Thank you for your submissions

The AER's consultation on our 2020-25 Revised Regulatory Proposal is now closed. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who provided a submission on 2020-25 Revised Proposal to the Regulator – these will be published on the AER's website soon.

- the Stakeholder Engagement Team

If you have any questions about this newsletter or want to provide additional feedback, please email us on talkingpower@sapowernetworks.com.au and we will contact you. Click to view the full grievance policy.

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