

Media release

10 November 2019



Essential Energy working to restore power across fire ravaged areas

Essential Energy has mobilised more than 150 personnel from across NSW to restore power to thousands of homes and businesses impacted by the unprecedented number of severe fires burning across the north-east NSW.

With a number of fires still burning and extreme conditions forecast over coming days, Essential Energy has warned more customers could be affected in areas where the blazes are threatening power supplies.

Brendon Neyland, Essential Energy's Acting General Manager Customer & Network Services, said "The scale of what is ahead of us is significant. We are anticipating emergency response will continue for some days under challenging conditions. We are hoping conditions ease today to allow safe access to inspect network damage before the anticipated worsening on Monday and Tuesday next week. Tuesday's fire conditions are forecast to be extreme so the situation could deteriorate, resulting in further network damage and limiting our ability to gain safe access to impacted areas and restore power."

"As of 12pm on Sunday we have 7,025 customers without power. We will be mobilising up to 300 staff from across our network to assist in restoration efforts. We've established Essential Energy response hubs in Taree, Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Grafton and Nambucca with support from teams across our organisation to safely restore the power to impacted communities."

Customers in the local government areas of MidCoast, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Kempsey, Armidale, Nambucca, Bellingen, Clarence Valley and Ballina are all impacted by outages as the fires damaged parts of Essential Energy's electricity distribution network.

Initial indications are that in excess of 400 poles have been destroyed by the fires, and this number is likely to increase as crews can safely assess impacted areas.

Essential Energy crews have restored electricity to a number of homes and businesses over the last 48 hours but is emphasising that customers should be prepared for their power to go out before the fire hits their property.

Essential Energy has employees embedded in the Emergency Operational Centres, working closely with the Rural Fire Service and other agencies.

Essential Energy acknowledges the support and patience of the community as we work with authorities to safely restore power to affected areas. The public are urged to stay at least eight metres away from any fallen powerlines and report them on 13 20 80. The Essential Energy website www.essentialenergy.com.au will have information about outages, however, due to the uncertainty as to when we can access the sites, in many cases estimated times to restore will not be available.

FACT FILE:

- Essential Energy builds, operates and maintains one of Australia's largest electricity distribution networks, servicing 855,00 customers across regional, rural and remote NSW.
- Our footprint covers 95 percent of NSW, traversing 737,000 square kilometres of landmass with 183,612 km of powerline, 163,417 of those in designated bushfire zones.
- The network services more than 855,000 customers with approximately 4.6 customers to each kilometre of powerline, which is almost one-tenth the customer density compared with our counterparts in NSW.
- Essential Energy's footprint also includes 1.38 million power poles, equating to 1.6 power poles per customer.

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