

19 January 2018

Getting the drill on new pole testing tool

Essential Energy is introducing new pole inspection technology to improve work practices, productivity and employee health and safety.

The staged roll-out of the hand-held automated wood inspection drill begins in July 2018 following a successful field trial of the new equipment across seven environmental zones.

General Manager Network Services, Luke Jenner, said Essential Energy was always on the lookout for new innovations and technology to improve work practices for its employees.

“Our extensive field trial of the drills late last year found that the improved ergonomics meant that they were easier to handle for our asset inspectors than current equipment and resulted in less injuries,” Luke said.

“The new drills automatically drill through the diameter of the pole whilst measuring the resistance to drilling. This information is stored electronically and analysed to provide an extremely accurate picture of pole condition.”

“The inspection procedure itself is also less invasive and minimises damage to the pole structure as there is significant reduction in the need to drill larger inspection holes in all poles.”

The new drill is estimated to deliver Essential Energy annual cost savings of \$1.3 million and provide improved asset condition data through more accurate pole density measurements.

“A critical component of the technology is the improved measure of remaining pole timber compared with current methodology, enabling better pole defect identification,” Luke said.

It is also anticipated that new equipment will contribute to asset inspectors being able to complete more pole inspections per day.

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Media Release



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Suggested caption: The hand-held wood inspection drill is easier to handle for Essential Energy asset inspectors and will deliver productivity and efficiency gains.

Essential Energy is the operator of Australia's largest electricity network spanning 95 per cent of New South Wales' land mass. Owned by the New South Wales Government, Essential Energy employs around 4,600 people and also provides water and sewerage services to customers in far western New South Wales.²