

Media release

13 November 2019



Essential Energy restarts repairs in fire-ravaged areas

Essential Energy crews are now starting to move back into bushfire impacted areas of northern NSW to continue network restoration efforts. Over 250 Essential Energy personnel are on the ground, working closely with the RFS and once given the all-clear, will be restoring power to around 5,200 customers currently experiencing power outages in communities including Taree, Kempsey, Tamworth, Grafton and Forster.

Aerial patrols have indicated significant damage to the network, with more than 440 poles and associated electrical equipment destroyed by the fires in northern NSW. This initial number is likely to increase as ground, drone and helicopter patrols on the network are completed over coming days.

Ongoing fire activity and dangerous firegrounds continue to restrict access to assess other parts of the network, and Essential Energy is cautioning the possibility of further outages if fires continue to take hold. A state of emergency and total fire ban is still in place.

Brendon Neyland, Essential Energy's Acting General Manager Customer & Network Services, said "Looking after the safety of the local community and our people is always our priority. As this response continues, we're ensuring our local crews are supported with additional Essential Energy personnel coming from other areas across NSW."

Electricity has been restored to multiple home and businesses since the bushfire crisis escalated last week.

Essential Energy is continuing to coordinate responses with the Rural Fire Service and other agencies, locating key personnel in their Emergency Operational Centres to ensure an effective response.

"We want to thank the community for all their support, but also for their understanding and patience. The reality is that we're still working with many unknown factors – we don't know when we'll be able to safely access the network again – but we do know that we're working as hard as possible to get the power back on," said Mr Neyland.

As the public are returning to their properties, Essential Energy wants to remind everyone to stay at least eight metres away from 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 855,000 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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