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Helicopter inspections in Bairnsdale to aid bushfire preparedness

East Gippsland's electricity distributor SP AusNet, will begin using helicopters to inspect powerlines, powerpoles and pole top hardware to ensure it is well ahead in its preparation for the upcoming bushfire season.

The inspections will begin in Bairnsdale on Wednesday 4 August and will cover parts of SP AusNet's electricity distribution network, as part of the bushfire mitigation program, which includes vegetation and asset management.

SP AusNet spokesperson Joe Adamo said the inspections will survey powerpoles of SP AusNet's electricity distribution network in eastern and north eastern Victoria from the air as part of this program.

"These aerial inspections are being carried out in addition to SP AusNet's annual inspection program, which sees more than 65,000 powerpoles inspected each year to ensure a safe and reliable power supply," he said.

"SP AusNet has comprehensive bushfire mitigation and vegetation management strategies in place in preparation for the coming fire season," he said.

Aerial inspections are being carried out in Bairnsdale and surrounding areas that are within 3km of state forests or plantations.

Mr Adamo said the helicopter was being flown at about 500 feet, with blades that will create as little noise impact as possible.

"Inspections will be carried out from 8.30am to 4pm, to further minimise disruption to residents," he said.

"Cutting-edge technology will allow photos to be taken by the helicopter and be examined by a technical specialist, after which an assessment will be made of the condition of the assets and appropriate action taken.

"The helicopter allows us to take photos of each pole top, as well as its GPS coordinates, which allows us to determine the exact location, if maintenance work needs to be carried out.

"These helicopter inspections are a part of our extensive program of work to ensure that we are as prepared for the coming bushfire season," Mr Adamo said.

SP AusNet is scheduled to complete its bushfire mitigation and vegetation work before the commencement of the declared bushfire season, meeting all regulatory requirements and ensuring a high level of preparedness for its network.

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