

Friday 12 August 2011

SP AusNet helicopter visits Newhaven College

Students at Newhaven College received a sneak peak at the state-of-the art helicopter used by SP AusNet as part of the local electricity distributor's community program aimed at raising awareness of its bushfire mitigation plans.

The helicopter is used by SP AusNet for inspecting powerlines, powerpoles and pole top hardware to ensure the company is well ahead in its preparation for the upcoming bushfire season.

SP AusNet Eastern Regional Manager, Jim Haylock, said the inspections surveyed powerpoles in SP AusNet's electricity distribution network in eastern and north eastern Victoria and the school visit was part of SP AusNet's community program aimed at strengthening links with communities.

"These aerial inspections are being carried out in addition to SP AusNet's annual inspection program, which sees more than 100,000 powerpoles inspected each year to ensure a safe and reliable electricity supply," Jim said.

"SP AusNet has comprehensive bushfire mitigation and vegetation management strategies in place in preparation for the upcoming bushfire season. This school visit gives students an opportunity to listen and learn more about the role the helicopter plays in SP AusNet's bushfire mitigation plans," he said.

Aerial inspections are being carried out in parts of Leongatha and surrounding areas.

Mr Haylock said the helicopter was being flown at about 450 feet. SP AusNet has employed this type of helicopter because the unique design (with no tail rotor) ensures it is the quietest helicopter available for this type of work.

"Inspections will be carried out from 8am to 5pm during the week to further minimise disruption to residents, however some inspections may be required on weekends," Jim 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 on 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 part of our extensive program of work to ensure we are as prepared for the upcoming bushfire season as we can be," he 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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