

Friday 19 August 2011

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## Helicopter inspections in North East Victoria to aid bushfire preparedness

SP AusNet's helicopter is currently circulating in North East Victoria inspecting powerlines, powerpoles and pole top hardware as part of the electricity distributor's bushfire mitigation program.

SP AusNet Northern Region Manager, Paul Lane, said the inspections, which complement the company's vegetation and asset management program, are undertaken in SP AusNet's electricity distribution network in eastern and north eastern Victoria.

"These aerial inspections are part of SP AusNet's annual program to inspect more than 126,000 power poles each year to ensure a safe and reliable power supply," Mr Lane 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 over a two week period on around 7000 poles in North East Victoria, including towns such as Myrtleford, Mt Beauty, Beechworth, Bright, Yackandandah and Wodonga.

Mr Lane said the helicopter is being flown at about 350 feet, with blades that will create as little noise impact as possible.

"Inspections will be carried out from 8.00am to 4pm to further minimise disruption to residents," Mr Lane said.

"Cutting-edge technology will allow photos to be taken in 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 by our field workers.

"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," 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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