

Media statement – 4pm 18 June 2013

Orion prepares for stormy weather in Christchurch and central Canterbury

Christchurch-based electricity network company Orion is ready to respond to any impacts from the forecast bad weather on its network.

“In the past 48 hours we’ve checked our network and our teams are on standby to respond immediately if the power supply is affected,” says Orion chief executive Rob Jamieson. “We also have 13 electricity generators on standby – each capable of powering up to 200 homes.”

“I’m confident that years of careful planning and training will stand us in good stead if the storm hits. Our people are very experienced in responding to these types of events,” Mr Jamieson continues.

What can people expect from their power supply?

If it snows or floods or there are very high winds, some power cuts are likely.

While Orion will do what it can to get the power back on quickly, conditions may hamper progress.

In the north-eastern suburbs of Christchurch, Orion is still rebuilding its electricity network after the Canterbury earthquakes, so the network there is less resilient than usual. The main high voltage power supply into the area is via temporary overhead lines built as an emergency measure after the quakes.

Overhead lines are more vulnerable to high winds and snow, compared to underground cables. Most of the very high voltage power supply in Christchurch is via underground cables, so the unique conditions in the north-eastern suburbs make that area more vulnerable to power cuts at this time. New underground cable is currently being laid into eastern Christchurch to replace the temporary overhead lines, but is not yet ready to be used.

What can people do to help?

Last year, almost all of the power cuts in snow storms in Orion’s network area were caused by trees falling into lines. Tree owners need to be aware of their responsibilities to keep trees and branches clear of power lines.

What can people do to prepare for power cuts?

People need to be prepared and have a plan to cope with very cold conditions.

In particular, always keep a torch, battery radio and warm clothes handy. Stock up on batteries for your torch and radio, spare blankets, gas for your heaters and charge your mobile phone. You should also have a plan for cooking food, such as on a barbeque or portable gas cooker.

Listen to the radio for Civil Defence messages and arrange to go and stay with someone else if necessary.

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