

Your private powerlines

Safety & bushfire prevention

Bushfire season 2014/15



Keep your property safe

Bushfires pose a risk to life, property and the environment in rural and urban areas throughout New South Wales.

Overhead powerlines that aren't inspected and properly maintained can become a serious bushfire or safety hazard.

Do you have a 'private' powerline?

Some customers in Ausgrid's network area have private powerlines. If you have a private powerline you must ensure it is not a bushfire or safety risk.

Your private powerline usually starts at, and includes, the first low voltage pole on your property. All the wires, poles, fittings and attachments beyond this are usually considered 'private', including those between different buildings and structures on the same property.

Is your property bushfire prone?

Your local council can tell you if your property has been classified as bushfire prone.

For more information contact the NSW Rural Fire Service on 1800 679 737 or visit www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

What should you do?

Just as Ausgrid maintains the powerlines and poles that it owns, its customers are required to maintain any privately-owned powerlines so the installation operates safely and in accordance with our Bushfire Risk Management Plan.

Broken poles and fittings and powerlines brought down by strong winds, trees and branches can all pose serious risks to your safety and the community.

You must ensure all your powerlines and poles are free from any defects that may cause a fire or other hazard. This may include frayed wires, damaged poles or trees too close to powerlines.

Help prevent bushfires

Property owners should:

- Arrange for a licensed electrical contractor to carry out periodic safety checks of the electrical wiring in your premises.
- Arrange an annual inspection before the start of the bushfire danger period to check for defects on your private powerlines and poles.
- Keep trees well clear of your powerlines – and arrange for an appropriately qualified tree trimmer to remove vegetation that is too close to your private powerlines.
- Regularly organise a detailed inspection of your private power poles, including below-ground pole inspection and treatment by qualified persons.
- Promptly repair any identified defects (such as broken wires or damaged insulators) using a licensed electrical contractor of your choice.
- Use only qualified people to undertake inspections, repairs, installations or tree trimming near powerlines.

In cases where no action has been taken to address an identified bushfire risk, Ausgrid may need to disconnect supply for safety reasons.

Ausgrid works with the community to help prevent bushfires by:

- Undertaking annual land and helicopter patrols across bushfire zones within its electricity network to check for hazards on high-voltage powerlines.
- Maintaining safe distances between Ausgrid powerlines and trees on public property in our distribution area, through tree trimming and vegetation management programs.
- Providing detailed information to customers on electrical safety and bushfire risk management via brochures, customer notifications and our website.
- Assisting customers in identifying their private powerlines and poles.
- Checking private powerlines for defects and notifying landowners/occupiers when they need to remove or rectify bushfire hazards.

Check for hazards

Clashing wires

Avoid uninsulated wires clashing in windy weather. Fitting 'spreaders' (which keep the wires separated) is one solution. Ensure only a licensed electrical contractor undertakes this work.

Slack wires

If one wire hangs lower than others or the wires are slack they are more likely to clash. You will need to engage a licensed electrical contractor to repair these wires.

Damaged wires

If the insulation that protects some wires is missing or damaged, the exposed wire may be live. Contact with the wire could be fatal, and vegetation touching the wire in this area is more likely to start a fire. Wires with missing or damaged insulation should be replaced, not repaired, and only by a licensed electrical contractor.

Trees near powerlines

Trees and other vegetation growing too close to powerlines may cause fires or other safety risks. Trees must be trimmed to relevant standards to provide a safe clearance and allow for future regrowth. Overhanging limbs and branches should also be removed in bushfire prone areas. Pruning near live powerlines must only be done by tree trimmers who are qualified to work around the electricity network.

Termites, rot and rust

Termites and wood rot can cause serious structural damage to your private poles. All termite-infested poles need to be treated by a registered pest controller. Metal poles should be checked for rust above and below ground. Any unsafe poles must be replaced by a licensed electrical contractor.

For further information

For detailed safety information, including a list of companies contracted by Ausgrid to inspect poles and trim trees, or if you have any other questions, please visit www.ausgrid.com.au/bushfires or call us on **13 13 65**.

For a list of licensed electrical contractors who can inspect or repair your powerlines, look under 'Electrical Contractors' in the Yellow Pages or visit www.yellowpages.com.au

To check the currency of licences, contact the Office of Fair Trading on 13 32 20.

For advice on bushfire prevention, contact the NSW Rural Fire Service on 1800 679 737 or visit www.rfs.nsw.gov.au