Managing fire risk

Bushfires and transmission

WIMMERA RENEWABLE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

- Well maintained transmission networks are built to high standards to minimise bushfire risk.
- Firefighting activities are permitted near transmission lines - including aerial firefighting.
- Transmission lines can be seriously impacted from bushfires. We will plan to reduce the risks.

Do transmission lines cause bushfires?

Modern high voltage transmission lines have high conductors and are designed to exacting standards to ensure they do not spark.

However, faults in distribution lines - which have different standards - have contributed to bushfires.

WiRES will be a high voltage transmission built to modern standards to minimise bushfire risk.

To understand the difference between transmission lines and distribution lines, please read our factsheet Understanding transmission.

Bushfire risk for transmission lines

Bushfires can impact transmission lines and cause widespread outages when power is most needed for individuals and emergency services. Risks include:

- direct damage: intense heat from bushfires can cause lines to sag, melt, or potentially collapse
- fallen trees: burning trees and debris can fall into and around transmission lines
- electrical faults: smoke and ash from fires can affect insulators, leading to electrical faults and outages.

Reducing bushfire risk around transmission lines

To reduce the risk of bushfires impacting transmission lines, we will:

- design the transmission line to avoid vegetation where possible, to minimise clearing
- work with landholders to maintain a cleared area around transmission lines by trimming trees and vegetation
- work with network operators to decrease capacity during a bushfire.

Firefighting near transmission lines

In the event of a bushfire near transmission lines, firefighting activities including aerial firefighting are still permitted.

Firefighters receive training about how to fight fires near transmission lines and the Civil Aviation Safety Authority determines the safe flying distance near transmission lines for aerial crews.

Firefighting has occurred around or under transmission infrastructure across Australia for decades.

Planning for bushfires

Prior to any construction taking place, WiRES will first undertake a rigorous planning approval process which will consider the impact and risk of bushfire.

Throughout all phases of the project, we will prioritise safety and reduce bushfire risk through:

Design: Ensuring design of the transmission line meets all standards, regulations, and safety requirements, and carefully considers the nature of vegetation in the easement.

Compliance with the *Country Fire Authority Act (1958)*: Complying with the specific controls prescribed under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958 (Vic)* for any works undertaken during a fire danger period.

Engaging fire authorities: WiRES will engage extensively with the CFA and other authorities including local and State Government with a role in bushfire planning, management and response.

Implementation of Bushfire Management Plan: Setting clear fire mitigation actions during construction and operation in a Bushfire Management Plan.

Constructing firebreaks and access roads: Firebreaks and access roads will be established along transmission corridors wherever feasible to make firefighting efforts possible and improve access for emergency responders.

Vegetation management: Wires will comply with local legislated standards for vegetation management near transmission corridors during construction.

Rigorous maintenance: A detailed maintenance and inspection system will be in place to identify and address potential fire hazards, including vegetation management.

Maintaining transmission line easements

An easement is required to ensure land uses close to transmission lines is compatible with the infrastructure, and to secure access for maintenance, repairs, and inspections.

They are kept clear of vegetation that would pose a risk to the transmission lines, often acting as a firebreak.

Typically, transmission line operators conduct annual pre-summer vegetation maintenance to protect the transmission lines from the risk of bushfires.

Related information:

- Country Fire Authority - cfa.vic.gov.au
- Fire Rescue Vic - frv.vic.gov.au
- Planned Burns Vic - plannedburns.ffm.vic.gov.au
- Forest Fire Management Vic - ffm.vic.gov.au
- Emergency Management Vic - emv.vic.gov.au
- Energy Safe Victoria - esv.vic.gov.au

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