

Media Release

Energy Safe Victoria

25th March 2019

Energy Safe Victoria independent report to be released

Victoria's energy safety regulator Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) will release an independent report on the state of power poles in Victoria's south west, Director of Energy Safety Paul Fearon announced today.

The report, to be released in May, will provide an independent expert view on Powercor's inspection practices, particularly the identification of poles with cavities in them.

"ESV has had the spotlight on this issue for some time. So far we have found no systemic issues with power poles in the area," Mr Fearon said.

"However, we expanded our investigation after community members identified potentially defective poles on the Sparrow Spur. These poles have undergone detailed sonic testing, the results of which will inform our report."

ESV has already conducted technical reports into all the fires started by electrical assets on 17th March 2018 (St Patrick's Day). Our investigations concluded that two of those fires (Terang and Garvoc) warranted further legal investigation to determine whether breaches of the Act had occurred. Those investigations are continuing.

ESV also observed laboratory testing to determine the strength of a series of poles. One of those poles failed and ESV is investigating the cause.

ESV will also independently assess Powercor's inspection of 19,000 poles in order to validate their conclusions.

"Energy Safe Victoria will hold Powercor to account and prosecute if necessary if they have broken the law," Mr Fearon said.

"We will also continue to test and challenge their systems to ensure they are fit for purpose and safe into the future."

This month was the one year anniversary of the fires in the south west and earlier this year was the 10 year anniversary of Black Saturday.

"We remember the suffering, loss and devastation caused by these bushfires and our thoughts are with the many victims of those fires," Mr Fearon said.

"The mission to avoid a repeat of scale of these disasters is a constant reminder of the importance of the work we do, along with many other agencies."

Victoria's Director of Energy Safety Paul Fearon is available for interview on request

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